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THE

COMMUNICANT's SPIRITUAL COMPANION;

OR, AN

EVANGELICAL PREPARATION

FOR THE

LORD's SUPPER.

IN WHICH ARE SHEWN

THE NATURE OF THE ORDINANCE, AND THE DISPOSITIONS REQUISITE FOR A PROFITABLE PARTICIPATION THEREOF.

Given by Charles B. Ford

WITH

MEDITATIONS AND HELPS FOR PRAYER, SUITABLE TO THE SUBJECT.

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PREFACE.

THE following Treatise upon the SACRAMENT, was drawn up at Oxford. It was part of a course of Catechetical Lectures on Sunday afternoons. It pleased God, at the time of delivery, to bless them greatly to the instruction and edification of the people. I pray the spirit of all grace, that he would still accompany them with his blessing.

Reader, thou wilt find three points chiefly proposed in this work.

First....To open the conscience to a discovery of its guilt and misery, its great need of Jesus, and the salvation which is in him. This is the leading point in our most holy Religion; a soul unawakened to a sense

of sin, and unaffected with the views of his own inbred corruption, and departure from God, can have no more business at the Lord's table, than a man in health hath for a physician.

Secondly....To explain the true nature of the Lord's Supper, the intention of it, and the privileges therein conferred on the faithful. And here Jesus must needs be the *Alpha* and *Omega*. The institution is his, the things signified are his Body and Blood, the blessings conferred are all purchased by him, and freely bestowed on his covenant people. In short, Christ is here peculiarly *all and in all*.

Thirdly....To enforce that universal surrender of heart to the Redeemer which his love to us so justly demands; that as we declare solemnly this is our intention, to devote to him our bodies, souls and spirits, "to be a living sacrifice, holy and "acceptable to God, which is our

"reasonable service;" we may show the truth of our professions, by such a conversation as becometh godliness; not content with the lukewarm negligence of careless professors, but showing the zealous diligence of active disciples; not resting on the ceremonious performance of an ordinance, but living every day in a course of communion with God.

The Prayers and Meditations are added as necessary means to promote such, a daily walking with God; for as we live daily pensioners on the divine grace, we must every day ask our daily bread, and in the field of the word collect the living manna. Certain it is, that a real Christian can no more live without prayer and the word of God, than a living body can subsist without proper nourishment; and they will be most flourishing in their souls' health, whose appetite for the sin-

cere milk of the word is keenest, and who pray without ceasing.

May the God of all grace accept this mite cast into his Treasury, and make it effectual to the advancement of his own glory, and the salvation of redeemed souls.

T. H.

ALDWINCKLE,
October 10, 1764.

THE

COMMUNICANT's

SPIRITUAL COMPANION.

INTRODUCTION.

NO Ordinance more peculiarly merits the regard of all professors of the religion of Jesus, than that which seals to them the blessings of the covenant of grace. The decay of vital and spiritual religion is evident in nothing more than the general neglect of these holy mysteries: and a revival of it can never be hoped for, till a serious concern about eternity awakens the soul to inquire about the nature of the gospel salvation, and the means of grace which lead to it: to effect this, is the design of the following pages. The careless professor will here find, I trust, alarming notices of his danger, and calls to consideration; the ignorant, instruction; the fearful, solution of

their doubts; the sincere, assistance; the strong, increasing light, support and encouragement.

May the great Master of assemblies fix the following truths deeply and abidingly in the heart of every one who reads them.

CHAP. I.

Of the Nature of a Sacrament.

A SACRAMENT is defined by the Church, in our excellent though concise Catechism, to be "the outward and visible sign "of an inward and spiritual grace, given "unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a "means whereby we receive the same, and "as a pledge to assure us thereof." In this Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the Bread and Wine are the outward signs, signifying that Body and blood of Christ which is received into the heart by faith. The sign of the Bread signifies Christ's broken Body, the Wine his Blood shed for our sins; and the sign is mutual, for it represents also our dependence upon and esteem of him, whose

Body and Blood under these signs we spiritually partake of.

The original meaning of the word *Sacrament*, signifies the oath by which the Roman soldiers bound themselves to their general. Thus it is our oath of allegiance, wherein we swear fidelity to Jesus the Captain of our salvation; as they swore that they would never desert their colors in the day of battle, we also herein solemnly engage to maintain irreconcileable war against all the enemies of Christ without and within us, fighting manfully under his banner against sin, the world and the devil, and this at the peril of our eternal damnation. So that whenever we presume to come to Christ's table, without this war against sin maintained in our conversation, we become guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ; we incur the awful guilt of perjury; and "eat "and drink our own damnation, not discern-"ing the Lord's Body."

This Sacrament hath in Scripture several particular names, which are expressive of the nature and design of it.

1. The *Lord's Supper*. It is a spiritual repast for the soul, as meat is for the body; and as our Bodies are refreshed by the Bread and Wine, so much more is the believing soul by the Body and Blood of Christ therein shown forth. It is a chief

banquet in the family of Christ, as supper was among the ancients; and therefore none of the children should be absent, unless upon very urgent occasions, lest they not only lose their food, but incur the displeasure of their Father for their neglect and irregularities. And it is emphatically styled the *Lord's Supper*, forasmuch as it was instituted by him at supper time, the same night in which he was betrayed, and then a constant memorial of it commanded by him; and herein it is so highly distinguished from all common food, whether you consider the Master of the feast, the Lord of glory, or the spiritual nourishment contained under these consecrated elements.

2. It is called the *Communion of the Blood of Christ*. It represents the intercourse there is between Christ the head, and the members of his body, called in the prayer after the Communion, "the company of all faithful people." He communicates to them herein his favor and grace, his blood and righteousness; and they communicate their thanksgiving, acceptance, love and gratitude; so that no persons can at all partake in it, till they have a living union with him, and are a part of his mystical body; for then only the nourishment and support can be communicated to them. All who are not thus united to Christ, are as branches

cut off and withered, and can receive no more benefit by coming to the Lord's Table, than a dead body can from meat and drink. It is also a communion with the members themselves, as well as with their head Jesus Christ, *for we being many, are but one body:* and we eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup, in token that we derive our life from one common fountain; that we are all actuated by the same Spirit, and have as near an interest in, and affection for one another, as the members of the same body have—*for we are the body of Christ, and members in particular.* What a strange absurdity then would it be for an uncharitable soul, for one who is not influenced by brotherly love, to approach Christ's Table, who would be there only as a mortified limb cut off from all living communication with the rest, and full of putrefaction?

3. It is called the *New Testament* in Christ's Blood. *Where a testament is, there must of necessity,* saith St. Paul, *be the death of the testator; for a testament or will is only in force after men are dead.* In the Sacrament this Testament is opened: the Blood of Christ, here emblematically poured out of his heart, shows it is valid by his death; and all the legacies therein contained are to be applied for and paid down, according to the purport of the will of the deceased; and

it is sealed with blood, as, on the renovation of the old covenant on Sinai, Moses sprinkled the blood of calves and goats with scarlet wool, and hyssop on the book of the Law, signifying thereby the sealing of the Covenant; so here God condescends by this continual sign to seal to us visibly, for the assistance of our faith, all the blessings of the Covenant of Grace in Christ Jesus. Assuring us by such an ordinance of his own appointment, that this shall be, as the rainbow in the clouds, the sure sign to us that no deluge of wrath shall ever again sweep away those who come to him by Jesus Christ.

The design then of the Lord's Supper may be partly seen from these names, and is fully expressed in one of our answers in the Catechism; it was ordained "for the "continual remembrance of the sacrifice of "the death of Christ, and of the benefits "which we receive thereby." To both of which points I shall speak a little.

1. It was ordained "for the continual re-"membrance of the sacrifice of the death of "Christ." Here we are taught to look upon him as bleeding for us upon the accursed tree. Here the Lamb of God, as if he had been newly slain, is in the ordinance set forth as crucified among us. Here the broken Bread represents his mangled body, torn with scourgings and buffetings, pierced by

the thorns, the nails and the spear. Here we may see his agonies, remember his mockery, reproach, insults, and all the complicated miseries, which made his sufferings the most afflictive that ever earth beheld: *Behold and see, all ye that pass by, was there any sorrow like unto his sorrow!* Here also we see his blood gushing as from his side, when the soldier's spear entered his heart, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. This his bitter death we are to remember; and that it was a sacrifice for our sins. As under the Law, the sinner laid his hand upon the victim's head, in token of transferring the guilt of all his sins upon him; so here we must especially remember that the transaction before us is sacrificial and vicarious. That Christ gave *himself an offering for sin, made himself a curse for us,* as it is written, *Cursed is every one who hangeth on a tree;* so that we are to look upon him herein as "taking away sin by the sa-"crifice of himself," and bearing the burden of your and my iniquities in particular. And in this sacrifice of the death of Christ, many things are represented to us, as included in the transaction, and which we are called at the same time to remember. Such as,

1. The great love of Christ towards us sinners. Was ever love indeed like his?

well may it be called *love which passeth knowledge*. Angels are lost in wonder, whilst they look into the mystery of redeeming love; and how then should we, to whom this love is shown, be astonished whilst we are called to partake of it? He died not for angels, but for men; and when? was it when we were faithful, affectionate and obedient, that we gained his heart to such an expensive manifestation of his love? No;—when *we were enemies by wicked works*, when we were without strength or power to love or obey him, even then *in due time did Christ die for the ungodly:* in us there was nothing but misery, we were lost in sin, wilfully lost by our disobedience, without power or inclination to seek for any favor at God's hands; and he wanted not our services, his glory would have been unsullied, if he had given us up to the fruit of our folly, and left us to our deserved ruin; neither can he receive any addition to his happiness by us, who is in himself all-sufficient, and in his nature infinitely happy, exalted above all blessing and praise. But, freely moved by the mere benignity of his heart, and out of pure compassion to us, Jesus offered to stand in our stead; and since to save us he must be made man, his love stooped to every meanness of our condition, to the form of a servant, to the death of a slave. Love brought him

down from the throne of glory, love clothed him with a body like our own, love urged him on through all the painful steps of his afflicted life; the waters of trouble were never able to quench it, nor the floods of persecution to drown it. Love put the cup of trembling into his hand, love bid him drink the last drop of all its dregs; *For having loved his own, he loved them unto the end;* his love abode till he cried, *It is finished;* when, having sealed with blood the sure and well-ordered covenant, his soul was dismissed, and he went to begin his triumphs over death, hell and the grave; and when he arose again, love was his first expression, *Go to my brethren, and say, I ascend to my Father and your Father.* Love carried him to the right hand of God, and there he is this moment showing forth the unchangeableness of his affection, by *ever living to make intercession for us,* and pleading before the throne the marks of love so deeply engraven in his hands and in his side. And when can we then be called so feelingly to remember this love, as at an ordinance, where all its glory is made to pass before us?

2. We are here to call to mind the great evil of sin. Never was it seen in such glaring colors, as when it was written in a Saviour's sweat, and tears and blood. Here sin indeed appears exceedingly sinful. Its hor-

rid nature and deep malignity are seen throughout the whole transaction, beyond what all the miseries which ever attended it before could possibly lead us to conceive. The cries of infants, the pains of sickness, the groans of wretchedness, the agonies of the expiring, and all the awful horrors of death, serve in some measure to tell us what an evil and bitter thing sin is, which could have occasioned such dire effects; and yet one glance at the glass of the sufferings of Jesus, will reflect the horrid image of sin, in colors infinitely darker and deeper.—There we see it black indeed, when an incarnate God agonizes under its load, when horror and darkness filled his soul with intolerable anguish, and pain tortured his body till the sweat, as great drops of blood, fell down to the ground. Was this for sin? yes, brethren, it was sin which made Jesus *exceeding sorrowful even unto death;* it was sin made him *sore amazed and very heavy;* it was sin which extorted from him that piercing cry, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Behold and tremble then, whilst you look upon this awful sight. Look in, and let these sufferings cast a light upon your vile hearts; and learn to lothe and abhor yourselves and sin, whilst here you are taught to see its inexpressibly abominable nature.

3. Herein remember also the inexorable justice of God. Though love would pardon, yet must it be in a way wherein justice should be satisfied. Sin required an expiation equivalent to its high demerit; neither earth nor heaven afforded any such; *I looked and there was none to help.* Justice demanded righteous judgment, such as had been poured upon rebel angels cast down into hell on their first transgression; the thunderbolt of wrath was lifted up to smite us sinners to the lowest pit. Jesus steps between, and cries, *Stay them from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom;* receives the deadly shafts in his own body on the tree, and manifests the justice of God more gloriously than could have been done by the destruction of the whole human race. For who is this? This is Jesus the Son of God, *the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person;* this is the Father's equal, the man *that is his fellow;* this is the eternal God, come to expiate his creatures' crimes. Satisfaction was demanded; he offers to pay, to over-pay every demand. The price agreed, the judge executes his claim; *Awake my sword,* he cries, *against the shepherd;* the sword awoke to smite to the uttermost, and take full vengeance for the sins of a fallen world. *It pleased the Lord to put him to*

grief; he laid upon him the iniquities of us all; and what would have utterly crushed us into hell, bruised to death the only Son God. Behold the severity of God; *He spared not his own Son;* see herein what a flaming sword justice holds, and how it is honored by such a sacrifice; see from hence what a fearful thing it is to *fall into the hands of the living God;* and in this ordinance learn to tremble whilst you see nothing but the Blood of God himself capable of expiating your guilt, and satisfying the demands of his own inexorable Law.

4. This sacrifice calls upon you to remember the conquest made by it. You, a child of wrath, an heir of hell, a slave of Satan, here see your liberty proclaimed, your tyrant destroyed, your misery done away. A dying Jesus, on the accursed tree, conquers for you; death, hell, and sin, fall before him. Strong in weakness, *he triumphed on the cross, spoiling the principalities and powers of darkness, and making a shew of them openly. By death he destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil;* as a sweet singer of Israel expresses it:

"And when I bled and groan'd and died,
"I ruin'd Satan's throne;
"High on my cross I hung, and spy'd
"The monster tumbling down."

Thus he hath vanquished all our enemies for us, hath bound Satan from hurting us, plucked out the sting of death, and sealed up the bottomless pit. His death is our life, his fall our victory, his cross our triumph; well then may we glory in it, and determine to know nothing else but Jesus, and him crucified, since hereby we become more than conquerors, and are enabled daily to tread down Satan under our feet. And in this ordinance, peculiarly designed to strengthen our souls, this glorious victory should never be forgotten, no less for the honor of Jesus, than the comfort to be derived from it to our own souls.

5. It should always remind us of his coming again. It is as the pledge of our friend put into our hands to remember him in his absence, and to assure us he intends us another visit. This is to be a continual remembrance, *to show forth the Lord's death till he come.* Though he is gone to heaven now, yet he hath promised us he will return and take his humble followers home with him; *I go*, says he, *to prepare a mansion for you.* When we see him present with us in the symbols of Bread and Wine, we should think how quickly we shall see the sign of the Son of Man in the clouds; how soon we shall in our flesh see God, and with our eyes behold him, even that very body

which the nails tore, and the spear pierced; shall see him, but now brighter than the sun when it shineth in its strength, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, accompanied by hosts of heaven which no man can number; *coming to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all that believe.* And this will be a remembrance most comforting to those, who, by the present ordinance sealing to them all the promises of God, are assured that when *he shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.*

Such are the views which are included under the remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ; which leads,

2. To the consideration of the benefits we receive thereby. These are great and manifold. In general, Jesus Christ makes over his whole self to every believer, and therewith all the blessings of grace and glory, which, by his obedience unto death, he hath purchased for us. God, in giving us his Son, *doth also with him freely give us all things;* and of these the following are the most remarkable.

1. The pardon of sin. This is the first and grand purchase of the sacrifice of Christ; his blood was shed for the remission of sins. Sin made the great breach between God and

us; its guilt condemned, whilst its power enslaved us; we lay under a curse, which we could neither remove nor endure: but Christ, by his undertaking for us, hath opened to us a door of hope, a way *in which God is righteous and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;* whilst he accepts our surety, and exacts from him the immense debts with which we stood chargeable.

In the gospel the glad tidings of free salvation are brought to us, and we are called to embrace them; and here, for the confirmation of our faith, God condescends to put his seal to his Covenant of Grace, ratifying to us the purchased pardon, and assuring to us thereby, that he will *be merciful to our unrighteousness, and will remember our sins and iniquities no more;* and we testify our consent and hearty desire of its accomplishment, by coming to receive the free gift of God in Jesus Christ, and casting our souls upon the promise. How high the gift! how great the benefit! pardon of sin! a free pardon, without money and without price; a pardon for the chief of sinners, for a world of sinners; though dearly purchased by Christ, freely given to us; a pardon that silences condemnation, removes fear, begets boldness. Doth the Law accuse? we point to this sacrifice and say, There is my satis-

faction. Doth conscience tremble? looking to Jesus, how can we fear? Are we weighed down with our guilt, peculiarly heavy, bound as under an ephah of lead, or lying under a burthen as the sand of the sea; this blood cleanseth from all sin, unbinds every heavy burden, sets the prisoner free, sends him forth from the pit of sin and death, to partake in the glorious liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. Come then, ye guilty sinners, whose black crimes cover you with confusion; come, ye leprous souls, who want to wash and be clean; come, ye burdened consciences, and lay down your load at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ. He hath purchased all your want, and invites you to come and take of the water of life freely, to wash your crimson sins away in the fountain of his blood, and to be restored to the full enjoyment of God's favor, just as if you had never sinned. Here is a pardon for you written in blood, and sealed in blood, confirmed by the word and oath of God, that *by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us.*

2. Adoption of children is another benefit of Christ's passion. We who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the promises, are brought nigh,

through the blood of Christ, and made fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. His obedience to death not only removes guilt, but confers favor upon us. We are hereby reinstated in all the forfeited rights of children, which, by our fall we had lost, and receive the adoption of sons, as well as are delivered from the curse of the Law. In this ordinance God the Father promises to be a father to all those who come unto him by Jesus Christ; that he will give them a place in his family upon earth, and an inheritance among the joint heirs with Christ in heaven. That he will take greater care of them than the most tender parent, and love them with an everlasting love. He gives them this pledge, as the father gave the prodigal son the ring; whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption; and withal sheds abroad in their hearts his love, begetting theirs: *because we are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts, whereby we cry Abba, Father.* Thus the children, coming to their Father at the Table where their elder brother hath provided a feast of love for them, receive increase in every filial temper and disposition, and grow up into him in all things, who is their head, even Christ.—Here then behold the precious purchase of

a Saviour's blood; that we, the heirs of wrath, and children of darkness; that we, dust of the earth, vile as men, abominable as sinners, that we, aliens and enemies in our minds by wicked works, should be bro't nigh, not merely permitted, as the prodigal asked, to be put among the hired servants, but robed in the Saviour's righteousness, placed among his children, seated at his table, blessed with his favor, partakers of the provisions of his house below, and looking for an *inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, which fadeth not away, reserved for us in heaven.* Well may we cry out with astonishment, *Behold, what manner of love is this which the father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!*

3. Another benefit is the consolation and joy which are herein dispensed. To rejoice in Christ Jesus, to have peace with God, through faith, to be filled with comfort and joy of the Holy Ghost, in the present earnest and sure prospects of glory to come, is in a peculiar measure the case in this ordinance, where all things visibly tend to beget confidence in God, Here we often get *Pisgah* views of the promised land; here the mourning saint finds joy, the weary, rest; the dejected, encouragement; the strong, increasing confidence; here the spirit of faith applies the atonement, and the sense of re-

conciliation often fills our souls with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and Christ intends his people should comfort themselves, should abound in all spiritual joy, and come as to a feast where gladness is sown for the upright in heart. Here we should dry our tears; at least if they fall, they should be tears of joy; we should put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and not sit mournfully before the Lord of hosts, nor cloud the joy of the festivity with sorrow on our brow, unless such a sorrow as St. Paul mentions, *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.* Whilst though mourning for our sins, we believe the greatness of the gift herein bestowed on us; and the spirit witnesses with our spirit to the work he hath wrought in us, and gives us a present taste of our inheritance, before we are actually put in possession of the purchased glory in heaven.

What a delightful ordinance! How many thousands of real christians have experienced the comforts of it, and daily continue to do so? Real Christians! I say; not mere ceremonial visitors; they feel, taste, and handle nothing of the word of life; the bread and wine are to them barren elements, dry breasts which afford no consolation; but the soul vitally united to Christ can say, *I sat under his shadow with great delight. He brought me to his banqueting-house, and his*

banner over me was love. He tastes the joy therein dispensed, and goes away rejoicing because he hath seen the Lord.

4. In this ordinance also there is a free distribution according to every man's necessities of strength and power from Jesus Christ, for all the work a christian is called to; it is one instituted means of conveying to believers the supplies of the Spirit for their wilderness state, both to subdue their corruptions, and strengthen their graces.—Here we draw water out of the wells of salvation, and, like Elijah travelling to the mount of Horeb, receive from time to time our provision, in the refreshment of which we may hold on our way, and wax stronger and stronger till we come to the heavenly Horeb, the mount Zion, the Jerusalem which is above. If our corruptions are strong, here is grace to mortify them; here we are taught and do receive humility to supplant pride, heavenly mindedness instead of worldliness, and purity instead of pollution. The example before us, as well as the grace ministered, powerfully calls upon us to learn of him to be meek and lowly of heart; not to be of the world, even as he was not of the world; to walk in holiness, as he also walked. Are our graces all feeble and weak? where shall we blow the smoking flax into a flame

if not here, where every thing conspires to confirm our faith, to enliven our hopes, to kindle our warmest affections, to enlarge our charity, to inspire our zeal, to teach us meekness, to quicken our languor, to encourage our perseverance, to excite our thankfulness; in short, to work in us every divine temper and disposition? This blessed ordinance is designed to strengthen us mightily in the inner man, to support us under all discouragements without, and fears within, that we might go on from strength to strength, from grace to grace, till we come to the blessed place where we shall go from glory to glory.

Here then are great and glorious privileges obtained by the precious Blood of the Son of God, and we are called upon to come and partake in all of them; and what excuse can we make? Do not we want a pardon? Is adoption a despicable blessing? Is spiritual joy an insipid pleasure? or the gift of God's Spirit an unnecessary assistance?—Why then do so many slight the ordinance of the Lord, and neglect this great salvation? Do you disclaim any relation to Jesus Christ, and renounce his religion, that you decline making this profession, and have no desires after the benefits of his death and passion? Surely they who never think of remembering the Lord's death till he come, will be

most unprepared to meet him on a dying bed, or in a day of judgment. I beseech you to consider this, you that forget God, lest, by your slight of him, he be provoked to give you up to your own inventions, and you die in your sins, neither sprinkled with his Blood, nor clothed with his righteousness, nor partakers of his Spirit: Be assured they who forget Christ now, will be disowned by him in the day of his appearing and glory.

CHAP. II.

An Invitation to the Communion.

WHEN in the parable the table for the marriage feast was spread, the oxen and fatlings killed, the servants in waiting, the royal bridegroom seated, a message was sent to hasten the guests, *Come now, for all things are ready.* With this message, brethren, am I sent to every one of you, beseeching and intreating you for Christ's sake, that ye would be reconciled to God, and as a token thereof to come unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. But as their message

of old was rejected, so too frequently is ours. The most of you agree with one consent to excuse yourselves; the farms and the merchandize, the cares and pleasures of this life so engross your time, that you have neither inclination nor leisure to attend the call; and of those who do come, how many forget the wedding garment, and thrust themselves in unwelcome guests, who, after having eaten and drank in Christ's presence, will be bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. To the one and the other of these, I will address the following words, before I enter upon the consideration of the temper necessary for the profitable partaking of the Lord's Supper. And here I intend to show you,

I. The great danger of neglecting this ordinance.

II. The great guilt of coming to it unworthily.

I. The great danger of neglecting this ordinance. And this will appear,

1. If we consider it as a breach of the express commandment of Jesus Christ. It was among his last words the night before he was betrayed, that his disciples should *do this in remembrance of him.* The words of a friend are always dear, but his dying words especially apt to dwell upon the mind

and to neglect his last commands would be then a sure mark of having no friendship for him. Now this is evidently the case with those who wait not upon the Lord at his Table to remember his death till he come. They confess that they have no friendship for him, by their disobedience to the things which he hath commanded them. They live in the avowed neglect of a positive precept, and thereby bring down upon themselves the reward of transgressors, who have despised his counsels. And that you may see it is no small offence this, I wish you to observe the heavy wrath of God denounced against those who neglected to celebrate the Passover (to which our Communion answers, representing to us a deliverance from sin and hell, infinitely greater than that from Egyptian bondage) *that soul was to be cut off from his people. Now if they who despised Moses' law died without mercy, of how much sorer punishment suppose ye, shall we be thought worthy, if we neglect so great salvation?* Careless sinners, who turn their backs on the Lord's table, think little of the guilt this adds to their state, and how severely every such neglected opportunity will be answered for, when this Jesus shall come to execute judgment on all the despisers of his name and ordinances.

2. The great danger of neglect herein is evident, in that by so doing we continue dead in trespasses and sins. *Except*, says Christ himself, *ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.* Now though this primarily refers to the reception of the gospel, and doth not exclude those from eternal life, who, having received the gospel, are waiting upon God, with a purpose of heart of soon devoting their souls to him in this solemn ordinance; it evidently excludes all those who have neither received Christ into their hearts by faith, nor desire to be partakers of the seals of his covenant; it is not possible for such to have any spiritual life in them; they are dead in trespasses and sins; and they declare hereby their abiding indisposition for, and disinclination to all the exercises of a spiritual life. The soul whom Christ hath quickened, delights to be maintaining daily communion with him, to wait in his house and at his table, whenever he hath opportunity; but you have no such desires, no such disposition, because you have chosen death rather than life, and are daily pursuing a course, the end of which must be everlasting destruction. Ask yourself this plain question, Why do not I come

to the Communion? And what can you answer, but that, I am living in the pursuit of iniquities, which I have no inclination to forsake; and what is this but a plain acknowledgment of the dreadful misery in which you are lying every day, liable to the wrath of God, and assuredly ready to receive it, if you die as you live, without a new birth, from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.

3. The danger of neglecting the Lord's Table is evident, as it includes the renunciation of our covenant with God. There are but two sorts of people in the world, Believers and Unbelievers; those who are within the covenant, and those who are out of it. When we were infants, the charitable act done for us in Baptism, and the conditional engagement then entered into, can profit us nothing, unless we are putting in our own claim to the blessings then promised; and by partaking in the other sacrament, when we are come to the years of discretion, declare we thankfully embrace the covenant of grace, and receive the signs and seals thereof, in token both of our dependence upon Christ, and renewed dedication to him; where this is not done, we deny in fact our baptismal engagements, break the covenant we have entered into, and declare our disavowal of all the promis-

es then made for us. Hence we can claim nothing under it, and are left, though we may be professing members of Christ outwardly, *aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the promises; without Christ, without God*, without the covenant, and consequently without hope, without grace, and without heaven.

4. The great danger of neglecting it is evident from the great wrath and indignation God hath revealed against the despisers of his covenant. It is said, in Romans i. 18. *That the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* Here then you may read your own condemnation. Who of you, that is come to years of discretion, doth not know the great duty lying upon you to remember the death of Christ? Do not you condemn others that live in neglect of the Lord's Supper; and what is this but condemning yourself? You have excuses, I know, but I warn you there will none of them be taken in the day of judgment; and your own consciences will tell you so, if you will but give them time to speak. You know your breaking the commands of God is what nothing can excuse, and therefore you may be fully assured that the wrath of God lieth upon you. O that from each of

these considerations I knew how to reach your hearts with such an awful, such a tender expostulation, as might at once alarm and constrain you; and what urgent cause have I to speak, whilst I see the dreadful neglect of many of you who never come, and of others who come so seldom, that the same condemnation lieth at their door.—Are all such flagrant transgressors? are all such dead in trespasses and sins? are all such out of the church of God? are all such under the wrath of God? In what a fearful state then, brethren, are most of you living? in what an ungrateful state, where you make Christ's blood to be shed in vain, for you? have you no sensibility of the amazing love of Jesus, of him who lived, who bled, who groaned, who wept, who suffered, who died for you? hath he undergone so many things for you in vain? and surely it is as yet in vain: for do not you slight all his mercies, despise his salvation, count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and do despite to the Spirit of grace, whilst you quench all his strivings? But if love will not move, at least let fear dismay you: consider what it is to be an outcast of heaven, to be a stranger to God's covenant, to be an enemy to Christ, to be marked out for the divine vengeance, to be without a Saviour in the day of judgment, to be exposed to the storms of

eternal wrath, to be banished from God's presence, to be cast into hell, and have your portion with unbelievers; yet all this, fearful and tremendous as it is, lieth against your soul. Thou, even thou, art the man. Not having communion with Christ, you are as a branch dried up and withered, which men gather and cast into the fire, and they are burned. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to consider these awful truths, and begin to examine your souls, lest, with the thousands that have gone before you, you should perish after the same example of unbelief.

But I mean not herein, that with all your sins and carelessness about you, you should approach the sacred place where Christ spreads his table. No—There is a serious inquiry necessary before you presume to *eat of that bread and drink of that cup*, which too many rashly and unadvisedly thrust themselves to partake of, who have no discernment of the Lord's body. This therefore,

II. I address to you who come not, and all others who come with an undue disposition, that they consider the aggravated guilt of "eating and drinking their own damna-"tion, not discerning the Lord's Body." A fearful and a common case. *To discern the Lord's Body*, seems to be a phrase taken

from the use of the senses in bodily objects; as the eye discerns a prospect, the palate discerns its food, and the hand discerns what it handles; such spiritual discernment must the soul have of Jesus Christ in this ordinance, it must see him by the eye of faith, it must verily and indeed receive him as actually to nourish the soul, as the Bread and Wine to strengthen and refresh the body; it must so *handle the word of life*, as to apply the blood of Christ, and his saving benefits. All which necessarily presupposes a new life, a living principle implanted in the soul, a resurrection from the death of sin, and a desire of growth in grace—concerning which I shall speak more particularly in the next chapter, only from hence it may be easily apprehended.

1. Who they are that, "not discerning the Lord's Body," eat and drink unworthily.

2. What is meant by "eating and drinking their own damnation."

1. Who they are that do not discern the Lord's Body, and eat and drink unworthily. And here I beg your serious attention; the matter is deeply interesting to you. I suppose our eternal salvation is in nothing more nearly concerned, than in a right approach to the Lord's Table; and therefore the following persons cannot possibly have any call to appear there.

(1.) Such as are without the knowledge of Christ, the nature of his salvation, their own wants, or the benefits they are to expect. As our food does not profit us when we have no appetite or digestion; so where knowledge is wanting, the Sacrament is mere Bread and Wine, and can in no wise minister to the soul strength or refreshment. Indeed, how is it possible they should remember Christ to any saving purpose, who are unacquainted with his nature as God and Man in mysterious union; with his offices, as a Prophet to teach, a Priest to atone and intercede for, a King to protect and rule over and in his people; and who have not so learned Christ out of the Scriptures, as to know why he saves, or how he saves? Here ignorance is a total bar; it is the darkness which cannot comprehend him. And the case is the same where the nature of his salvation is mistaken; when any come to the Lord's table, without seeing the entire freedom of the salvation; when they bring their works and good life to make them accepted, instead of laying down their sins at the foot of his cross; when they lean, either in whole or in part upon their own righteousness, instead of seeing him to be their alone righteousness before God; when they think the doing the

duty is to save them, instead of renouncing that, as well as every thing else, to plead only Christ's merit before God, then spiritual discernment must needs be wanting.—Again, when there is no knowledge of our own sinfulness, when we are ignorant of the miseries of our state by nature, and feel no burden under its present corruption; when we have no sense of the perverseness of our hearts, and the guiltiness of our lives; when we have never felt the desert of sin in the consciousness we have provoked God to cast us into hell; what should such do at a table, where a Saviour only stands for sinners' sakes? Or, in fine, if there be no knowledge nor expectation of the benefits procured by Christ, no desire of pardon, adoption, grace, or consolation, it is impossible we would have spiritual discernment, which consists in the apprehension and application of these to the soul. How stands your knowledge then? what know you of Christ? what of his salvation? what of your sins? what of the benefits you are to expect? Are these dark and unknown? is your understanding blind and ignorant? then you are certainly unfit to come to his table, and are, in the nature of things, excluded from all the blessings of the communion; for the sacraments do not of themselves work necessarily, but only according to our discern-

ment, according to the exercise of our spiritual senses.

(2.) Those are evidently excluded from the Lord's table, who live in any known sin, or the allowed and habitual neglect of any known duty. It were a horrid insult on the blessed Jesus, to come with a conscience still defiled, or with hands still unwashen from our iniquities, to touch his sacred sacramental Body; and therefore all who live in the open breach of his commandments, should be utterly cast out. And it were much to be wished the ancient discipline were restored, and all scandalous sinners cut off visibly, as they are spiritually, from the communion of Christ. Our church addresses, in her exhortation, a most solemn admonition by name to all such: "Therefore if any of you be a blasphemer of God, "(profane in any measure in your conversation) an hinderer or slanderer of his "word, an adulterer, or be in malice, envy, "or any other grievous crime, (such as "drunkenness, or sabbath-breaking, and the "like) repent, or come not, lest the devil "enter into you, as he did into Judas, and "fill you full of all iniquities." A wise admonition indeed! for *what communion hath light with darkness, or Christ with Belial?* And how can it ever be supposed that God would have respect to any offering, when

he sees our hearts going a whoring from him, after the abominable thing which he hates? If you can see in your soul that there is one allowed sin, which you are unwilling to part with, and for which your conscience condemns you, be assured that God is greater than your heart, and must much more condemn you. Whilst this is kept back, you can have no part nor lot in the matter. The mists of sin will hinder you from discerning Christ, and your very appearance among his people will be but profane mockery. And yet how many dare come, whose conversations testify against them that they are yet unwashen from their iniquities?—How many, who live habitually in pride and passion, pretend to drink into a meek and humble Jesus? How many, whose superficial inquiries into their hearts show they are afraid to go deeply to work? How many in the interval of the seasons let loose the reins to worldliness and gratification? And some I have heard of, horrid to think it! who suppose the mere act of communicating is the cancelling of the past offences, and a licence to sin again Surely such must be *in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.* The cup of blessing is to them a cup of trembling, and the bread of life a savor of death unto death. And the like may be said of those who live in the neglect of

any known duty, such as private prayer, prayer in their families, reading the scriptures, mutual exhortation, and all other helps appointed for our increase in grace; to neglect these, except once a month, or once a quarter, for a dull week it may be, by way of formal preparation for the Sacrament, whilst all the interval hath been spent in forgetfulness of God, and disregard of his service, or in some course of vanity, care, or indulgence: this, I say, is a direct proof of unsuitableness for the ordinance; such an one can never discern the Lord's Body.

(3.) They are excluded from any spiritual partaking of the Lord's Supper, who come merely to qualify themselves for an office; the impiety and profaneness of which is indeed past the power of words to express. What! can worms of the earth dare trifle with the Blood of the Son of God! and, merely to serve their own secular concerns, pollute the altar of the Lord? Can any thing be so horridly insolent as to come evidently with this thought: "Lord, I am not come here with any view to thy glory; I am not come here as an undone sinner, penitent and believing, to receive the pardon of my sins; I am not come to remember thy death, nor expecting any benefits from it; or at least these are not my chief aim.

I am come only to qualify myself for an office, a mere temporal business; and were it not for this I should gladly stay away."—What a language this! What spots are these at our feasts? What a hardness and stupidity of conscience is such communicating disposed to beget? This is making the Blood of the Covenant common indeed. I tremble for the consequences; knowing very well, that though we may be deceived, God will not be mocked. To have eaten and drank in his presence thus, will doubtless send us away at the last day, with a *Depart from me, I never knew you.* And they who now thus drink of the cup of the Lord, will be found among those who shall then *drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.*

(4.) They partake unworthily who only come at particular seasons, and, instead of having an habitual fitness, make all the work of the communion to consist in a week's preparation; as if the Lord's Supper was a mere slavish duty, and a week's cleansing was all that is necessary to approach it.—These mistake the very nature of the ordinance, and put their one week's preparation instead of all those tempers and dispositions which are required to be abidingly in the soul. For it is not cleansing the out-

side of the cup and platter, it is not the abstaining from gross sin, it is not saying so many prayers extraordinary, or not going into company, or being strictly regular for one week, that can show us to be faithful people. This is the strangest farce of devotion that can be conceived, and can neither be pleasing in the eyes of an heart-searching God, nor at all answer the end designed of preparing us for a suitable approach to the Lord's Table. The work to be done is heart-work; not of the lip and knee; and the preparation is the inward trimming of our graces not the outward form of a round of extraordinary duties.—None are meet to approach the Lord's Table who are not every day maintaining spiritual communion with Christ, and always ready for his table whenever a call invites them thither. There must be a daily sacramental vowing fidelity to him, and an exercise of faith in his death and the benefits of it, wherever Christ hath real communion with the soul. Hence you may see the absurdity of putting on religion, only as our best clothes, once a month, or a quarter; and that such persons as these, instead of being the friends of Christ, are no better than ceremonious visitors, whose room would be more welcome than their company. Christ, whose eyes are as a flame of

fire, and who searcheth the heart and the reins, sees nothing but spiritual ignorance under the mask of devotion, and no inward sense exercised to discern him, consequently not the least meetness for an approach to his Table; needs must he address such with *how camest thou in hither?*

(5.) To conclude: None can partake profitably who have not found acceptance with God, through the righeousness of the Saviour, and in consequence experience the mighty power of his grace on their souls. By the mighty power of his grace I mean that virtue derived from Christ, whereby a dead sinner is quickened to spiritual life, and endued with spiritual sensibility. If in this ordinance the exercise of repentance, faith, charity, thankfulness, humility, and of all the other graces, is necessarily required in order to a discerning the Lord's Body, then it is evident that they who are without these can never partake spiritually. Now we are all destitute of these, till the Spirit of God, making the gospel of Jesus effectual to us, enlightens our minds to see the fulness which is in Christ, and inspires these holy dispositions into our souls. We cannot repent and believe, and love and be thankful, or humble, when we will, or by our own power, in our natural state; we might as soon think of plucking the sun

from the firmament, as of exercising one of these graces. They are all the work of God, the parts of the divine nature communicated to the children who are begotten, *not after the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God.* Therefore if you do not know any such change wrought in you, any such new creation, any mighty working, like unto that which raised up Jesus from the dead; if you have not an experimental sense of the quickening influence of the Spirit of God upon your soul, and have not begun to see that you have passed from death unto life, from darkness unto light, from the power of Satan unto God, it is plain you cannot possibly partake discerningly in this ordinance. Should you give ever so much meat and drink to a dead man, it would neither bring him to life, nor nourish the carcase. The case is the same; if there be no spiritual life in the soul, there can be no strengthening and refreshing by the Body and Blood of Christ.

2. These persons therefore, one and another, must needs be excluded from all the saving benefits of Christ's death and passion; and if thus careless, ignorant, sinful and unconverted, they approach the Lord's Table, they must needs eat and drink their own damnation. A fearful word indeed!—enough to make the ears of every one that

heareth it to tingle; and which our church well explains thus—"We kindle God's wrath against us, we provoke him to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death; judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord."—Here you see that present judgments, and the wrath to come, are the wages of such, as by a rash, unadvised, and unsuitable approach to the Lord's Table, are guilty of the Body and blood of Christ our Saviour. And shall we provoke God's wrath against us? are we stronger than he? Forgive my tender concern for you—I am not speaking these things to grieve or disturb you, but as beloved children I warn you. You must be freely dealt with; you will not forgive me else, at the day of judgment, if I should now be unfaithful to your souls. I press, I invite you, yea, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, not to slight his Table, as you do. But then judge yourselves whether ye are in the faith, for if ye are amongst those I have described, you cannot be welcome guests; if you live in ignorance or sin, if you respect merely a temporal convenience, if you make it a matter of form, and have not a living principle of grace in your souls, abstain at present, as you would not imbrue your hands in Christ's blood, and crucify him afresh. Yet abstain not alto-

gether. As you value your everlasting salvation, do not lie down in this state, but hear the present call of Jesus; look to his sacrifice that still bleeds for you; call upon him whilst yet he is near, to prepare your heart according to the preparation of the sanctuary. Let your past forgetfulness, neglect and dishonor of him, lie deep upon your minds, and be among those things which especially humble you before him. And then arise, as perishing sinners, to lay yourselves at the foot of his cross, to look to him whom you have pierced, till faith in his Blood produces love in your souls toward him, and a willing heart leads you to his Table, to present yourselves a living sacrifice unto him. Then shall the ordinance be as much to his glory, as your comfort—and you shall find, by blessed experience, that you do not only come, but are welcome.

CHAP. III.

Self-Examination, a necessary duty before we come to the Lord's Supper.

AS the profiting in the blessed ordinance of the Lord's Supper, depends chiefly upon the disposition of mind in which we

approach it, it will become all, as St. Paul advises, who would come with spiritual discernment, and return with a blessing, seriously to examine themselves before they presume *to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* To comfort the afflicted, encourage the doubting, and to help the sincere in this behalf, will be the design of the present chapter, as well as to quicken every soul to the too neglected work of communing with his own heart. Our Church Catechism will supply us with the four principal and essential points of inquiry; which, if we understand thoroughly, and answer faithfully, we may come to the knowledge of our state respecting God, and consequently our fitness or unfitness for the Lord's Supper. And these are,

I. Whether we "repent truly of our former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead "a new life."

II. Whether we "have a lively faith in "God's mercy through Christ."

III. Whether we "have a thankful re- "membrance of his death."

IV. Whether "we are in charity with "all men."

Points, each of which deserve a larger treatment than this short exercise; and yet you may come to some safe determination

about them, if you will attend to what is now to be set before you.

I. Then, to examine whether you "repent truly of your former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life," you must understand what is meant by evangelical repentance and newness of life. I shall describe them as including,

1. A sorrow for Sin.
2. Hatred of Sin.
3. Forsaking of Sin.
4. An evident change wrought upon your heart and life.

1. Evangelical repentance includes sorrow for sin. *They who sow in tears shall reap in joy.* And when have we so much cause to be exercising sorrow for our sins, and to mourn, as when we are coming to *look upon him whom we have pierced?* here the foundation of repentance must be laid, we must lay to heart the great dishonor we have done to God by our sins, how many and great they have been, how vile our nature and hearts are, as well as how perverse our ways have been. We must reflect upon the ingratitude of sin, and how every act, every thought of it, has added a pang to the Saviour's agony. We must consider it as the grieving of the Spirit, the defilement of his temple our bodies, and the

abominable thing which he hateth. We should reflect on the wages of sin, even death eternal, and that of but one sin; how deeply then are we in arrear to the divine justice, when heart and life have been nothing but sin? Thus its evil nature and heavy guilt should both conspire to beget in us the deepest sorrow and remorse that ever we should dare transgress against the Majesty of heaven and the Father of Mercy; that ever we should be ungrateful to a dying Jesus; that ever we should provoke the patient Spirit; that ever we should madly trifle with our souls, and plunge them into such awful condemnation. But have such thoughts ever been harbored in your hearts? Are you now desiring to mourn for your iniquities; and do they, in these views, dwell upon your hearts as a sore burden, too heavy for you to bear? Are you sore smitten on the grievous remembrance, and ready, like the Prophet, to wish for a head of waters, and eyes like a fountain of tears, to run down day and night, for iniquities which a sea of your own tears would never wash away? Do you know any such sorrow, and is the grief for your sins the bitterest cup you have ever drank of? This is a gracious disposition; *for true godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, never to be repented of.*

2. Repentance implies an abhorrence of sin and ourselves. *Behold,* says Job, *I am vile, therefore I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes.* It is impossible, where a true sense of sin is upon the heart, this should be wanting; the heart then rises up with indignation, with revenge against itself, as St. Paul expresses it, and cannot bear the view of the past without self-loathing. To think how vilely we have acted, how insolently we have returned all God's kindness with abuse, how we have turned all his blessings into a curse, how we have slighted the love of Christ, how we have resisted the Holy Ghost in his word, in his providences, in all the methods of grace he hath used with us; in short, how we have sold ourselves, as it were, to work wickedness; and now to think of returning to the bosom of our God thus polluted and defiled, what vile wretches must we be in our own eyes! and to see ourselves such, is absolutely necessary before we can return. *Then,* saith the Lord, *they shall return, and remember their own evil ways, and their doings which were not good, and shall lothe themselves for all their iniquities and for all their abominations.* Are you conscious of any such self-abhorrence? can you adopt the language of Job's self-loathing, and in the view of your sins find the inward risings of disgust and displeasure against yourself and

them? do you appear in your own eyes a monster of ingratitude, and feel your heart detesting sin, which hath made you so, more than you detest the vilest objects in nature? at least is it your desire to hate it more than you do? This is the work of true repentance.

3. Repentance implies a forsaking of sin. We cannot indeed but forsake it, if we have groaned under its burden, and felt its odious ingratitude. How shall we think of continuing a moment longer in a state so displeasing to God, so grievous to ourselves? Here the sword of the Spirit is lifted up against every darling idol. Repenting, we renounce our covenant with sin, and our allegiance to Satan, and burst his bands, and break his cords off from us. No known sin can be any longer habitually indulged; not only the outward sins, whose open nature was more flagrantly rebellious, such as profaneneness, passion, lewdness, drunkenness, lying, sabbath-breaking, covetousness, and the like; but the more secret heart-sins will be renounced; vain thoughts, and vile affections, as well as actions, must be forsaken; no little sins any longer plead the privilege of custom or necessity. If we are sincere in our repentance, without pitying or sparing, our eye will search every corner of our heart; and wherever we find the traitor, we shall

bring him forth and slay him before the Lord; and our darling sin will meet with the severest treatment; *that* we shall lay most violent hands upon, whilst repentance cries, *Down with it, down with it, even to the ground;* a right eye, a right hand, any thing, however near and dear to us, away it goes. Repentance makes thorough work. It is not a partial reformation, this is in many where true repentance hath never wrought its effectual work; and thousands have been undone by the mistake, whilst conscience hath made them part from some sins, and be more restrained and decent than before; but they have still dealt deceitfully with the Lord, their hearts have not been whole with him, and so they have gone no farther than Ahab's humiliation, or Herod's doing many things at John's preaching to him repentance; of whom the one still continued idolatrous, and the other kept his brother Philip's wife. A person may be very nigh the kingdom of God, and yet never enter it; be *almost*, without being *altogether* a Christian; look therefore to your hearts herein, there is no deceiving God: and what a crying sin would it be to come to Christ's Table without a purpose of forsaking whatever is displeasing to him? Do you repent? is it evident from your conduct? Doth not your heart condemn you for any reserve made?

Can you appeal to God for your sincerity, that you desire to indulge yourself in nothing, you know or suspect to be sinful? Particularly, do you heartily resist and seek to mortify the sin which most easily besets you? And is your repentance for it proved to be real from this, that your sorrow for it is not only your heaviest grief, but that your heart is set most steadily against it, and follows it close, desiring to destroy it root and branch; lest it should make you false to your vows, and like the worm at Jonah's gourd, make your fair blossoms of repentance wither, and bring forth no fruit? This will be comfortable, if, in the presence of God, you can claim the proof of such a sincere, universal renunciation of sin. It will be then indeed *a repentance never to be repented of.*

4. Repentance implies a change of mind; this is the exact meaning of the Greek word *metanoia*: for every real penitent is brought out of a state of nature into a state of grace; and all his aims, apprehensions, views, and principles of action, are as different as you can suppose those of any two different persons ever to have been, so that he is well said in scripture *to be born again*; *old things are passed away, and all things are become new*; he *is brought out of darkness into marvellous light*; he *walks not after the fashion of the*

world, but after Christ; he looks not as before to the things *that are seen and are temporal, but to the things that are not seen and are eternal;* in short, he is changed into another man, *a new man, created after Christ Jesus in righteousness and true holiness.* Here then is a wide field for inquiry, and most essential to our profitable partaking at the Lord's Table, since none but those who have begun to lead a new life, can receive any benefit from attending on the ordinance. You must therefore herein closely examine yourselves. What do you know of this inward change?—Is your *understanding* changed? *Whereas you were blind, do you now see?*—you were *once darkness, are you now light in the Lord?* Have you a sight of yourself, of God, of Christ, of all the things of the Spirit, different from what you had before, so that your judgment is altered? Do you now discover the misery of your state by nature, the vanity of earth and time, the bondage of corruption, the great need of salvation, the unspeakable patience of God, the amazing love of Christ, the greatness of the invisible realities, and the importance of only making one thing needful, even the securing an interest in the kingdom of God and his righteousness?—Is your *will* also altered in its choice? Have you begun to choose Christ for a portion, instead of the

world? do you prefer his service to the service of sin? and, instead of the pursuits of this world, the pleasures of sense and the vanities of time; rejecting these, are you embracing the ways of peace, and the paths of holiness, which lead through faith to glory?—And are your *affections* changed? Do you love what you hated, and hate what you loved? Is Christ now the object of your affection, more than ever your favorite sin hath been? at least is it your desire and prayer that he may be so? Is it your *delight* to be found engaged in the exercises of devotion? or do you chide your sluggish heart when it goes heavily to the blessed work? Are you become more afraid of offending God, than the whole world beside? and are your *hopes* chiefly fixed on the promises of his word, and the expectations he bids you look to in eternity, instead of this present evil world? Is it your *joy* to see his interest flourish in the world? and is it a more sincere satisfaction to you to help to turn one sinner from the evil of his ways, than to partake in the greatest worldly advantages? In short, is it now become in a measure your meat and drink to do the will of God, and is that which you before loathed, namely, the denial of your own vile heart, and the keeping God's commandments now, become the constant desire of your soul,

and the thing that you long for? And doth your whole conversation witness to this change, and prove that you are indeed passed from death into life? that you walk no more as other unconverted men, *in the vanity of their minds, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*, but, as a child of light, reprove the works of darkness, and testify against the world that its deeds are evil? And do you purpose to hold on thus doing, walking daily more circumspectly, redeeming the time, and stedfastly pursuing this course of newness of life which God's holy word prescribes to you, whatever difficulties may befal you, and whatever more than you yet see may be your portion, whether of reproach, loss, or persecution, for your fidelity in Christ's service? This is that evangelical repentance you are called to. This must be the matter of your examination. If you can see no such change, if you are as you ever used to be, and never knew any time in your life when you were convinced by the Spirit of sin, led to him who giveth repentance, converted unto God and born again, (a change in its effects as evident and clear as to rise from the dead, or between a dry tree and one full of leaves, blossoms, and fruit) then, I say, you have not yet this newness

of life, you are still in a natural state, and ought not to think of approaching the Lord's Table, till matters are altered with you, and till the great change is begun, and is manifesting itself in your heart and life.

II. You must examine yourself whether you have "a lively faith in God's mercies through Christ." Observe, a *lively* faith, not a *dead* faith, not a mere speculative assent of the head to the truth of religion, but a quickening, powerful principle in the heart, a faith energetic, that worketh in us mightily. And this lively faith shows itself in the following ways:

1. In directing us to Christ, as our alone propitiation. It brings us, burdened as we are with our sins, to the foot of the cross; and there bidding us lay them down, points to the Blood shed for us, and pleads that propitiation with which God is well pleased.—In this way, and this only, we must look for salvation before God; renouncing our own righteousness, emptied of all self-sufficiency, confessing our guilt, and only resting on him, who is our atonement and our righteousness before God. Into Christ's hands, as our advocate, we commit our cause, that he may plead it effectually before the throne of God; and this with such satisfiedness in the availableness of his intercession as gives us confidence towards God, and such a per-

suasion of Christ's love, as that we can cheerfully and contentedly leave our salvation in his hands, assured that he is more willing to help us, than we to desire it; yea, that he was pleading with his Father for us before we began to look to him. This is the lively faith which embraces the promises afar off, and enables us to say, *In the Lord have I righteousness:* through his Blood have I the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace. The strength and confidence of our faith may be different in degree, but in all Christ's people it must be the same in nature. Some poor mourning soul, discouraged with doubts, though deeply renouncing all hope in himself, can only feebly cast his soul upon promises which he holds as it were with a trembling hand; yet this is that good hope through grace, which, though far removed from the full assurance of faith, is the sound evidence of a believing soul, and exercise and experience will confirm it. Others can by the Spirit, with humble confidence claim the salvation, rest satisfied in the sure and certain covenant, and rejoice in that *perfect love which casteth out fear*, persuaded that Christ hath *loved them, and given himself for them.* Inquire then, do you possess any measure of this temper? Have you a lively faith? Do you come with the empty hand and a beggar's heart, to re-

ceive a free salvation; renouncing your own righteousness, and disclaiming your duties as heartily as your sins in the matter of acceptance with God? Do you see enough in Christ to convince you he is able to save such a sinner as you, vile and sinful as you are? That *his blood cleanseth from all sin*, and that his righteousness imputed to you, will make you pleasing in the eyes of the God of purity? And are you satisfied in his willingness to save you, from all the free declarations he hath made, and all the mighty and gracious instances of that willingness and ability he hath given you? Do these (his power and willingness to save) beget in your mind a determined affiance in him, so that you can say, *Here shall be my rest for ever; this is all my salvation and all my desire*; then you have the discerning eye that sees Christ at his Table; the discerning taste that feeds upon him, the discerning ear that hears his voice, the discerning hand that receives out of his fulness, that wraps the robe of righteousness around you, and makes you complete in him.

2. A lively faith lays hold of the strength of Christ, as well as his atonement and righteousness. Unable to do any thing of himself, the believer, coming to him, can *do all things through Christ strengthening him.*— Faith bring us to him as the repairer of the

breach, as the healer of the deadly wound which sin hath given us, and which made us insufficient to think or do any thing pleasing to God. A lively faith seeks grace as well as pardon, and assures us it is to be had in Christ. It tells us, that though without him we can do nothing, yet in him, when we are weak, we shall be made strong, *strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;* hence in the Communion, the believer applies to him, and rests all the wants and necessities of his soul upon Jesus the Saviour. To enter into the covenant, to abide in it, faith takes the grace of Christ, makes him the surety to undertake for us; while we despair of our own power and might, and draw from him all our sufficiency. And, satisfied that his power and might shall be exercised for us, we rejoice in this confidence, that mighty as our enemies are, and weak and helpless as we are, yet that we shall be *more than conquerors through him that hath loved us.* Are you going to Christ with such application for strength, and from him do you find strength communicated to you? Do you see that without this grace you can do nothing? Do you sincerely renounce all hope in yourself, and make him your rock, his everlasting arms your support, his grace the ground of all your confidence? This is to believe; "to "have a lively sense of God's mercy in

"Christ;" for hereby this mercy comes home to our souls, we live upon it and by it; faith in Christ enabling us continually to apprehend it, so as to bring peace and pardon, and from it to derive strength and power against sin.

III. We must inquire into our thankfulness in "the remembrance of Christ's "death," and the great and precious privileges purchased by his blood-shedding for us. If we are really sensible of our fallen state, and have faith in the transaction here represented to us, it is not possible but our hearts should indeed be filled with gratitude and thankfulness to him who hath thus *loved us, and given himself for us.* And in proportion as we gain a clearer understanding of our own misery, and the condescension and love of Jesus Christ, our hearts will be more affected, and we shall come overflowing with praises to him, who hath died for us, and rose again. This thankfulness hath a thousand different points of view, from whence it takes occasion to admire and adore the grace of the Redeemer. Its most lively exercise arises from himself, and next to that from all the blessings given in and with him. We are filled with thankfulness that we have ever heard the sound of his name in our ears, or tasted the power of his grace in our hearts; that we have been made already par-

takers of so many blessings, and have so many greater ones in store; that not only the end is so great and glorious, but that in the way we have so many delightful seasons of refreshment, where we may find rest unto our souls. Christ living, dying, rising, ascending, sitting at the right hand of God, each of these affords new matter for thankfulness. This must be expressed by our lips, in hearty, humble acknowledgments of his love and kindness towards us; and not by our lips only, "but in our lives, by "giving up ourselves to his service, and by "walking before him in holiness and right-"eousness all our days." Have you any experience of such thankfulness in your heart? Do not you see when any person does you a great and unexpected favor, in any temporal things, how your heart rises towards them, and labors for expressions to testify the gratitude you feel? and how careful you are to please so generous a benefactor, if he is making you daily to partake of his bounty and munificence? Now if these trifles so affect you, and to be ungrateful and unthankful to man is looked upon as brutish and savage, how should these great things, that in Christ are given you, dwell upon your hearts? How should you be impressed and influenced by them? Are you so? Is your heart rising up in the remembrance of that great-

est of all gifts, God's own Son, with thanks too big for utterance? Are you praising him with joyful lips? or mourning at least over the coldness of your heart that loves and praises him no more? Doth your life testify the gratitude of your heart, by your carefulness to conform to his will and pleasure; never to offend him, or grieving if you do; in every thing desiring to show yourself no longer as your own, but his, who hath purchased you at so dear a price as his own blood, and called you to show forth his praise, by yielding yourselves to him as alive from the dead, and your *members instruments of righteousness unto holiness?* at least, is this your daily study, desire and prayer, that you may be enabled more and more to serve and please him. This is to be thankful, this is the proof that we have not received the grace of God in vain.

IV. We must examine whether "we are "in charity with all men." The religion of Jesus Christ is a religion of universal love; and especially it is needful that when we come to remember him who died for his enemies, we should partake in the like temper of charity. And herein you should examine yourselves.

First, Negatively. You must not entertain any hatred or malice against any of your brethren. The hands that are to be lifted

up, and the hearts to be brought to Christ's Table, must be *without* malicious *wrath*, as well as *doubting*. If therefore any soul of you is living in anger, implacable and unmerciful, proud and resentful, unwilling to ask forgiveness, or hard to grant it; if there be one person breathing, whose offences you do not from your heart give up all desire and thoughts of revenging; if you are not ready on the first evidence of repentance to forgive; and if you do not compassionate their perverseness, where you may not be permitted farther to show the exercise of love, you may be assured you can have no portion nor lot in the matter; your temper utterly excludes you; it can never be a feast of love to a revengeful spirit: and though you may pretend forgiveness, and seem reconciled, yet if the venom of malice rankle in your heart, and you want there the true spirit of charity, you are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; you cannot eat of the Lord's Body, nor have communion at his feast, nor partake of his benefits. Not that this merely is sufficient. I only mention it to show the glaring impiety of many who dare come with hearts full of uncharitableness, that probably the week before had been vending their undue anger, resentment and wrath, against those who have offended them, and have not mourned over and car-

ried these hateful tempers to Jesus to subdue them. What a horrid profanation for for such to pretend to a communion of saints, or to belong to that body, where every part hath the most tender care for its fellow-members? These surely are under wrath. These must repent and have their hearts changed, or wrath will shortly come upon them to the uttermost.

Secondly, Positively. We must be found in the exercise of charity; that is, we must have a tender feeling for the bodies and souls of men, whether Believers or Unbelievers; and this expressed in all proper acts of kindness and love towards them, according to their several states.

1. To Unbelievers, those that are not in a state of reconciliation with God; who, though they may be professors in the Church, evidence in their lives the unrenewed state of their hearts; these we must pity and pray for, must never be provoked to hatred with their wickedness, must bear with their opposition, abuse or reviling, must labor to return them good for evil, and blessing for cursing; must be ready to show our affection, by helping their bodies in any time of want, and readily ministering to their necessities out of our abundance; and especially desiring to help their souls, to seize any convenient occasion of conversing with them on

their state, to apprize them of their danger, to improve any impressions which God's grace or providence may have made; and labor in every way to pluck such brands from the burning, whether by undeceiving them if they rest on a form of godliness, or warning them if careless and utterly negligent. Are you showing forth any such exercise of love? Have you ever thus tenderly rebuked sin upon your brother? Have you pitied the misery of sinners? Have you borne with meekness and long suffering their provocations? Are you gentle towards all men, not easily provoked; ready to pass by a transgression; and never avenging yourself, by withholding assistance from your greatest enemy in his necessities? Are you ready to every good word and work for him, heaping coals of fire upon his head, to melt him down if possible to a sense of his ingratitude? Or whatever reluctance to it you find, in your remaining corrupt nature, is it your burden, and resolutely opposed? Can you pray affectionately for your bitterest enemy, and long for his conversion, that God may pardon him, as you are willing to do? This is a small, very small part of the exercise of this extensive grace; but I fear enough to condemn us, who are ready to kindle at every affront, to be impatient under provocation, to want compassion, to be

destitute of those bowels of mercies which were in Jesus Christ, to forget how much God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. Yet to this we must seek to come, after this we must press, or we can never come to Christ's Table acceptably, for he cannot bear to be approached by any heart, where love unfeigned hath not wrought this powerful work.

2. We must show our love especially to Believers. To those who are of the same body, whose conversation testifies the truth of the grace which is in them; over these we must delight, with these especially associate, at Christ's Table, or elsewhere; their bodies must be dear to us; whilst we do good to all, we must particularly regard the household of faith. But their souls especially we must watch for, mutually jealous over, and caring for each other, bearing with each other's infirmities, desiring each other's growth in grace, contributing to it by conversation, by example, by prayer, and every other means in our power; exhorting and admonishing one another, praying for and with each other, as brethren of the same family, as children of the same Father, as partakers of the same table, as hoping for the same inheritance; we must love as brethren. A love which hath been declared by many to be equal, I might say, to exceed

that which nature implants in the dearest relations of life. The true Believer can say, as Jesus Christ did of those who told him of his mother and his brethren, *He that heareth Christ's word, and doth it, the same is my brother, my sister and mother.* Have you such affection towards the children of God? Do you delight in those who love God, and keep his commandments? Are you seeking to approve yourself in every labor of love towards them, and receiving with thankfulness their labors of love towards you?—Have you the same regard for their welfare, that your body hath for the several members of it? and do you feel for them and with them in their trials, and alleviate their burdens by partaking of them? I have not space to enlarge the inquiry; but these may serve as short hints for your instruction, from whence you may draw a conclusion concerning your state and temper, how far you are really found in the exercise of these dispositions.

Blessed are they who have obtained any measure of these graces; blessed are they who are seeking after them. The sincere desire after an increase of grace, is true grace, and shall have a growing accomplishment. "Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord, repent you truly for your sins past; have a

"lively and steadfast faith in Christ our "Saviour; be thankful; amend your lives, "and be in perfect charity with all men;" and this not superficially, but from the heart, in simplicity and godly sincerity, and "so "shall ye be meet partakers of those holy "mysteries."

CHAP. IV.

Considerations proper at the Time of the Celebration of the Lord's Supper.

HAVING in the last chapter set before you what was necessary to be examined into, in order to come to a right judgment of our state, and to approach with suitable dispositions the Table of our Lord, I come now particularly to enter into the consideration of that frame of spirit which we should be in at the solemnity itself. Having the general requisites for the feast, there is also required a particular exercise of these graces, like trimming our lamps to go forth to meet the bridegroom. For this end, when we are purposing to renew our approach to the Lord's Table, it will be useful

at some season of leisure to inquire particularly how we stand, what progress we make in each of the aforementioned tempers, and that we spend some time in meditation and prayer with a view to the ordinance. Not that I mean to tie down any believer to a regular form which he may not omit, or drive him from the Table because the ordinance was unexpected, or some peculiar calls prevented him from particular previous exercises of retirement, examination, meditation and prayer: no; though it were desirable to be thus employed before, and in general such preparation will greatly conduce to the enlivening our hearts, and be a means of leading us in a more sacramental frame to the Table, yet he that hath the Lord Jesus formed in him, is always called upon to come and receive the tokens of his love.

At the celebration of the feast itself, the following observations will deserve our attention; and, I trust, minister to our edification.

I. How we should improve the time before we come to the Lord's Table.

II. How to demean ourselves at the Table.

III. The use we should make of what time remains when we return from the Table.

I. At the celebration of the Lord's Supper, we should approach the Table with a frame of mind suited to the particular occasion. As,

1. With a deep sense of our own unworthiness. The service ended, when communicating begins, some short time for recollection is afforded us; our first thoughts then should always be of the great condescension of Christ, that suffers such rebellious, such sinful dust and ashes as we are, to approach his Table: the deeper sense we have of our vileness, the more shall we admire the grace of a dying Saviour; and we can never enough abase ourselves, the lowest we can think of ourselves will be less than the truth of our state. If the holy Patriarch could say, *he was less than the least of all God's mercies*, what may we? Indeed the confession put into our mouths, that "we are not "worthy of so much as the crumbs that fall "from Christ's Table," should now be deep upon our hearts in some such thoughts as these, "What am I, Lord God, that I should "approach thy Table? What am I, who am "unworthy to be put among the dogs of the "flock, that I should be fed with children's "bread? What am I, that I should see the "King at his Table, who have so dishonored "him as I have done? What am I, that I "should come to claim such inexpressible

"privileges? I, who deserve nothing but "death, nothing but hell?" As *Mephibosheth* said to *David, What am I, that the king should look upon such a dead dog as I am?* God, to use the language of the Psalmist, *loves to take us from the dunghill*, before he *sets us among the princes. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.*

2. We should draw near with reverence and godly fear, remembering with whom we are transacting, even with the God of glory, before whom ten thousand times ten thousand burning seraphs minister, and whom angels adore; remembering what an awful work we are calling to mind, even that scene which the earth trembled, and the sun grew dark to behold; remembering how great an affair is now in hand, no less than the sealing to us the eternal redemption of our souls; these views will show us, that the frame of our minds cannot be enough serious and reverential. If *God is always to be feared in the assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are round about him*, when ought our exercise of this temper to be so deep and solemn, as in this most holy and sacred assembly? If the angels themselves approaching his throne, are represented as veiling their faces with their wings, how ought awe to spread its silent

dread upon our souls, and our countenance to receive the sacred impression, when we are approaching his Table? Dare we rush into the presence of an earthly monarch without veneration and respect? and shall we not be much more careful how we draw near to him, whose throne is in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all? That great Jehovah, that eternal God, who humbleth himself when he beholds the things in heaven; and how much more when he stoops to treat and commune with poor dying sinful worms of the earth?

3. We should approach without distraction. The sense of God should banish every other thought. We should leave the world behind us, and for the time seek to disengage ourselves from every care or concern about it; lifting up our hearts to him to restrain our wandering, and fixed on the point before us, as much as may be, without diverting from it, to the right hand or the left. And in order hereto, it will be profitable to keep our eyes from looking round us, to have so settled our worldly affairs before as to prevent their intrusion, and to keep our thoughts recollected that we may feel ourselves standing as it were naked and open before him with whom we have to do, seeing him that is invisible; the tempers of our

minds calm and serene, and all our thoughts fixed, sedate and attentive.

4. We should come with cheerful confidence in God, as our reconciled Father in Christ. As we are not going to hear our condemnation, but to receive our renewed acquittance and assurance of favor, we should approach in the character of children, should possess the confidence of children, with gladness and singleness of heart, coming to the Table where our Father gives the testimony of his regard to us. To come with slavish trembling and confusion to a feast of love, is utterly unseemly; and shows, either that we are unacquainted with the nature of the ordinance, or have not that faith which embraces the promises, and realizes the sign. We must remember we are approaching a Table which love, eternal love, hath spread for sinners. That we have such a powerful Advocate for us entered into the heavens; that we may come boldly to the throne of grace, and not fear a disappointment. And that therefore in the strength of all this, we may without presumption, if we are really children of God, draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. This disposition is as honorable to God, as comfortable to ourselves, and most needful now to be exercised when every soul should rejoice and be exceeding

glad, and triumph in the God of his salvation. When people come to the communion, as criminals to the bar, it plainly shows they are still under the Law, and are in bondage unto fear; that they have been resting on their own preparation, and their own worthiness, as though they must be in such a measure good, and they were afraid they had not arrived at the measure they proposed to themselves; thus making faith void and the promise of none effect. But believing Souls, (unless *for a season, if need be, they be in heaviness through manifold temptations*) will be cheerful ones; they become humble, yet confident; serious, yet cheerful.

5. We should draw near with hunger and thirst after righteousness. Just as at our meals appetite makes the feast, so it is here; *He filleth the hungry with good things, and sendeth the rich empty away.*— Such earnest cravings then as your body hath after food, such your soul should have after Christ, and his righteousness, that you may be found in him. Consider what you would feel if you travelled through a barren and dry land, would you not say, Hungry and thirsty your soul fainted? Would not you cry, Water, water, to cool the burning tongue? would not you drink deep into the stream, when from the rock the river issued

forth at your cry, and refreshed your parched throat? This world is that barren land, your soul that parched traveller, Christ the living rock, the ordinances the pools of water, to which if any man thirst, let him come and drink, yea, come and take of the water of life freely. See then that your hunger and thirst be felt; see that you relish and find such expressions as these, agreeable to your frame and temper: *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God, even for the living God; when shall I come to appear in the presence of God!* Then you will find your heart drawn up to greater nearness to God; your affections will be more united to him; and, as the refreshments of food to a hungry man, this feast will be *a feast of fat things, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.*

6. We should come with enlivened expectations of receiving according to the necessities of our souls. Having before examined our state in order to discover what graces we most stood in need of, what corruptions called for mortification, what trying circumstances have most endangered us, here we must look upon ourselves as sure to receive grace and strength proportioned to our wants. God, who calls upon us, is the

Lord of all grace, and he gives, like a King, liberally to every one that asketh, and this too usually *exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think;* all that Christ has purchased, and that is no less than all the blessings of time and eternity, we may put in our request for; and, instead of being thought unreasonable in our desires, the more enlarged they are, the more pleasing will they be to God. We cannot expect to receive so much as he is willing to give; full measure heaped up and running over, will he pour into the bosom of those who come to him with enlivened faith, and big with expectation of receiving, not for our deserts indeed, but for his righteousness' sake.

7. We should approach with fervent charity. This is commanded us above all things, and most needful when we are celebrating together this visible Communion of Saints; where we join in one body, to eat the same bread, and drink the same cup. Before you come here, you will have taken care to purge out the old leaven of malice and wickedness, that, as the elect of God, you might put on bowels of mercies, kindness, long-suffering, and, with a peculiar affection, love the brethren: here this love will have a lively exercise on the objects before you; you will find your heart ascending up

in prayer over them, thankful for them, delighting in them, regarding them as dear unto you as your own soul, at least desiring to be so affected, and chiding your heart for the deadness which at any time you experience. Then, whilst the Minister of the Lord is praying over them, that "the Body and Blood of Christ would keep their bodies and souls unto everlasting life," you will be wrestling in prayer together for them, that they may not go away without a blessing; according to the promise, that *where two or three are agreed together concerning any thing they should ask in Christ's name, it should be given them*

8. We should approach with a lively sense of the transaction itself. Christ, crucified before our eyes, should pierce our hearts with shame for our sins. His love should awaken our most lively affections; his unspeakable gift draw out our warmest gratitude; and all our souls, melted into self-loathing, humble joy, and holy delight, should testify how highly we esteem this most solemn ordinance. These views dwelling upon our minds, will greatly contribute to render our devotions before we communicate, fervent, humble and joyous; (and surely our hearts must be hard indeed, if on our knees there before the Lord, we find not some gracious relentings, some de-

lightful enlargements of soul towards Jesus Christ) nor is a lively, sensible experience of these things, at any time more desirable or more proper than now, considering where we are, what we remember, and how we are interested in it.

These are the things which will show our frame of spirit to be sacramental. Not that I would mean to say, that though we should come short in one or other of all these, we should therefore be unfit for the ordinance; no: but we should labor after these, be humbled for our great defectiveness and low advancements, whilst the higher measures we attain of these things, the more comfortable will the communion be, as well as more profitable.

II. Having thus improved the short time before the Lord's Supper, when we come to the Table, we must mind the grand business we have to do there, which is to receive Christ's pledge, in token that he hath received us, and to make a solemn surrender of our souls to him; so that henceforth *our Maker is our husband*, and we are no longer *our own* but his. Whilst the Minister then is about to put the elements into our hands and to make his prayer over us, this surrender should be made in the following way:

1. DELIBERATELY. Having counted the cost, on one hand we see a merciful and all-

sufficient Saviour, who hath all grace to pardon, and all power to renew, promising us to undertake for us, to bless, preserve and comfort us; yet withal, we being corrupt and fallen creatures, this cannot be done without a course of self-denial and mortification of our members upon earth, though to encourage us to it, this be most intimately connected with eternal glory. On the other hand, we see the indulgences of flesh and sense, the pleasures of sin for a season, but withal the curse of God in time and in eternity; we are therefore through grace fully disposed to renounce the one, and choose the other. This cannot be done too clearly and coolly. Before at our devotions, we cannot be too lively and fervent in spirit, here we cannot be too deliberate. Choosing Christ as our best portion, whatever mortification and self-denial, whatever reproach, whatever difficulties may attend his service, that so we may not in a fit of devotion swear we will *go with him to prison and to death*; and then by and by, when corruptions strive, and Satan tempts, or tribulation comes, be offended, and go back from our engagements; but so simply and steadily set our hands to the plough, as never to look back, but *be faithful unto death, that we may receive the crown of life.*

2. HUMBLY. We may not be confident, but *in the Lord, and the power of his might.* We are promising things, the least of which is above our strength. God must *work in us to do*, as he hath *wrought in us to will*; and it is with this view we must surrender up ourselves to him, humbly sensible that we are not in any wise *sufficient of ourselves*, but we *commit our souls into his hands, as a faithful Creator.*

The sense of our own nothingness should especially lie upon our hearts, when we are admitted to this awful covenant, and receive the seals of it into our hands. All is from the Lord; he alone that hath begun his work in us can perfect the same, and enable us to abide faithful to the vows which are upon us.

3. CHEERFULLY. We are a willing people; we give up our souls to Christ, and all we have, and are to be forever his; not so much because we are bound to do it, as because we delight to do it. We are a free-will offering; drawn, not driven, hearty, not reserved; love fixes our choice, and Christ is to us all in all. We wish we had a thousand hearts to give him, we would not hesitate to part with any thing he calls for, we would delight in that which he commands. With a willing mind, we take his easy yoke and light burden, and are pleased with every

opportunity of renewing our bonds, that we may thereby be united closer to the Lord our head.

4. SINCERELY. This indeed is the life of the whole. A double heart, a reserved surrrender, is an abomination before God. If our eye pities, or our heart spares one evil temper, one sin; if we should *dissemble with our lips, and flatter him with our tongue*, woe unto us; he that seeth our thoughts afar off, would condemn us even on our knees at the Table. Though we should deceive ourselves by our hypocrisy, God cannot be mocked. We must be sincere before him, our naked souls should be exposed to his view, and an honest appeal to our hearts, that God himself knows we desire to make no reserve. See to this, that you make no partial surrender; God must have all our hearts, or none; if we divide them, by fixing one part on the world, if we would plead for ever so little of its sinful indulgences, if we want to reconcile the services of God and mammon, allowing part of our affections to the pleasures, vanities, interests, or gain of this present evil world, and think God will be satisfied with the remainder, we are utterly mistaken. The true surrender is to give up all, and to take Christ as Lord of all, our King to reign over us, as well as our propitiation and atonement. This is sincer-

ity, much talked of, little known. See that it be your own case; without it the strongest promises, the greatest outward reformation, the most lively pangs of devotion, a torrent of tears, or the most solemn remorse, will but deceive you. Coolly, humbly, cheerfully and wholly, without partiality and without hypocrisy, desire to give up your soul to Christ; that so you may be able to adopt the words of an excellent Christian, and testify as he did:

"But if I might make some reserve,
"And duty did not call;
"I love my Lord with such a love,
"That I would give him all."

It will be a blessed ordinance indeed, if you can see such to be the frame of your heart at Christ's Table, and seal it by the solemn pledges of the Body and Blood of Christ, which are put into your hands.—Here then you will see at the first view the absurdity and ignorance it betrays, to be coming up to the Lord's Table reading some book of devotion, and in a formal dull way to be supplying the want of spirituality by such a lifeless repetition of a number of words. Surely if you come to give up your heart to Christ, if you feel the obligations lying upon you to do so, you can never need to read it out of a book; your eye should be on your heart, not the paper; and you

should be looking to the dear Saviour, whom you are remembering, and calling forth this heartiness, simplicity, and sincerity of soul, with which you choose the Lord for your portion.

Thus you may know how to behave at the Lord's Table. And then,

III. When you depart from thence, I suppose the following things will be a proper exercise for you.

1. You should retire to your place, and there begin with an *Amen* to all that hath passed; renewing before God the solemn renunciation of sin, and choice of Christ, which you have made, and the hearty purpose you have of abiding by it. You should there offer again your earnest supplications for grace to be faithful, and that you may really be enabled to receive the Lord Jesus, as a master to serve, as well as a portion to enjoy; that so this God may be your God for ever and ever, and you may be his even unto death.

2. You should depart with admiration of the condescension and grace you have experienced. That ever the God of glory should stoop to look upon you; that ever Jesus Christ should admit you to his Table; that ever the Holy Ghost should make your heart his dwelling; that ever such great and

precious promises should be made to you; that ever you should be permitted to receive the seals of the covenant, established with the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity; that ever he should institute such an ordinance, to confirm your faith in his purposes of mercy towards you. How astonishing is all this, enough almost to surpass belief, did not God himself assure us that all this is his will concerning us! Yet still be more amazed, when you consider what you are, a creature in the lowest rank of rational beings, a poor worm whose breath is in his nostrils, a dying man, sprung from the dust, and returning to the dust again; and more than all, a sinful, a corrupted creature by nature, by practice become the abomination of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; but now pardoned, adopted, counted righteous, sanctified, exalted to the most amazing privileges, even to be the heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. Hear, O heavens, and be astonished, O earth! Admire, ye angels that surround his throne, whilst ye minister to us below! What tongue can tell the wonders of redeeming grace! who can help breaking forth in astonishment, What manner of love is this! whilst overwhelmed with wonder too big for utterance, in silence we believe, admire, and adore! Such sensibility will

show a right apprehension of the greatness of the grace bestowed on us. And,

3. We should be filled with thankfulness. Such a frame is the consequence of the former; admiring the grace our hearts cry out, *What reward shall I give unto the Lord for all his benefits bestowed upon me? Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name; praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits. I will praise him with joyful lips, yea, as long as I have any being, will I sing praises to my God.* These are the breathings of the soul who hath tasted that the Lord is gracious; not the formal thanks of pharisaical ceremony, but the inward, deep, heartfelt expressions of a soul, that labors to tell the Lord Jesus how deeply he admires the grace in which he hath partaken; and a blessed frame this is. The comfort of it to the soul is as great as the honor done to God thereby; *for whoso offereth me praise*, saith he, *he glorifieth me.*

4. We should depart with a sense of our great imperfection in all our services. This is needful; lest if we have received much spiritual consolation, we should be exalted above measure; and truly cause enough there is for it, seeing in our best attendances upon God, there is much lacking, and when we have done all may justly say, we

are unprofitable servants. And who that knows his own heart, will not have cause to mourn over some unbelief, some coldness, some deadness, some wandering, some indisposition, some want of a lively exercise of grace, some undue affections? This all must be laid to our corruptions, whilst all that is good in us, should be ascribed to God's free grace, and the praise given to him to whom alone praise is due. Our very communicatings indeed would be our confusion and condemnation, yea, even of the best of us, if we had not one in heaven to bear the iniquity of our holy things, and to pardon the imperfection of our services, as well as the guilt of our sins; and therefore always to be clothed with humility; and to stand before God in the perfect righteousness of Christ, is the way to be always accepted of God.

5. We should rejoice in Christ Jesus, and in these fresh testimonies of his love towards us. To be abased for what we see amiss in ourselves, and yet happy in Christ Jesus, explains that strange, but blessed paradox of St. Paul, *though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.* Indeed our sorrows are a part of our joy; and that we can feel or mourn over our imperfections, is no slight testimony of Christ's love towards us: and when shall we rejoice, if not now, when we

have seen the Lord, have found a welcome, and received refreshment at his Table; have joined ourselves to him in bonds of an everlasting covenant, having espoused our souls to him in truth and in righteousness, and put on the seal of our adoption, the ring of our contract, and enjoyed spiritual communion with him, and obtained new supplies of grace from him? Surely may we say, *I will rejoice and be glad in thee, I will remember thy love more than wine. I will make mention of the loving kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all the great goodness that the Lord hath bestowed upon me.* Happy, holy joy! how different from the mirth of vanity, which makes the heart sad! how different from the short-lived joys of this world, which are but as the suddenly expiring blaze of thorns. This is the foretaste of eternal bliss, a drop of those everlasting pleasures out of the ocean, from which we shall shortly be replenished at God's right hand for evermore.

6. We should depart with fresh courage to fight the Lord's battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil. It was said of the primitive Christians when they met for these holy purposes, that "they went in as lambs, but came out as lions." So should it be said of us. Receiving strength from

the Lord, we should depart with full purpose of heart to cleave unto and labor for the Lord; to show forth all holy zeal and boldness, and never to be ashamed of our profession, or act unsuitably to it. This ordinance should mightily confirm, strengthen and stablish us: so that our souls, manifestly refreshed by it, may be pressing forwards, amidst surrounding enemies, with renewed vigor, *towards the mark for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus.*

7. Lastly, We should depart with increasing desires after the kingdom of heaven.—If in these lower courts, the glimpse of glory be so delightful, what must the full blaze of that beatific vision be, when we shall no longer through the dark glass of faith, but face to face, behold Jesus as he is? When we shall see him with our mortal eye enthroned, to bless and glorify his people; and find all our souls infinitely more happy in the intimate union to, and communion with him, than now it is possible for us to conceive. Here our joys are at best imperfect, and some tears of sorrow for what remains of darkness and sin, still steal down our cheeks; but there every tear shall be wiped from our eyes, there imperfection will be no more, we shall be like him, as he is, *perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.* Hath our faith then entered into

that within the veil, have we seen Jesus sitting on the right hand of God, how can we but *desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better?* How can we but long for the wings of a dove, that we may fly away, and be at rest in this dear Saviour's bosom? Is faith at present so comfortable? is hope only so pleasing? what must it then be when faith is lost in sight, and hope in enjoyment? See then that your souls pant high for glory, and that you go away from this Table with such a heavenly mind, as both brings down a taste of heaven below, and sharpens the desire after the full enjoyment of everlasting rest. This will be a profitable use of the ordinance. I can pray for nothing more conducive to your eternal salvation, than that such may be abidingly and increasingly the holy frame of your mind. Then you will know the blessing of discerning the Lord's Body; and find, by delightful experience, that the Body and Blood of Christ, thus received, will keep your body and soul unto everlasting life.

CHAP. V.

Directions for the Communicant's daily Walk with God after receiving the Lord's Supper.

HAVING hitherto led you on from the nature of the ordinance to the dispositions necessary for partaking of it, and the frame wherein we should approach the Lord's Table, I would conclude the whole with some considerations of what sort our after consideration should be, and by what means we may be enabled so to walk, as becomes our profession. This being the great end of the ordinance, that its influence may abide with us, and that it be not looked upon as a ceremonious visit, which we may forget till the time returns again. And here I solemnly admonish all you, who have partaken in these holy mysteries, to *take heed to yourselves, lest you lose the things you have wrought.* Remember Judas, who no sooner received the sop, but Satan entered into him; and, though he so often had eat and drank at Christ's Table, was a son of perdition, and betrayed his master.—And therefore if, as we have engaged, we would take Christ for our master, and live as his faithful and covenant servants, or

rather brethren and friends, then must we show forth the following conversation.

1. We should go forth into the world professing his name. We must not be ashamed of Christ, nor his cause; we should speak for his honor, and glory in his cross. Profession now becomes peculiarly demanded from us as Communicants; and whilst in these evil days, vital Christianity and real religion is branded with every opprobrious name that an ungodly world, who know not the truth, can invent; we must heartily welcome these reproaches, and walk so as to deserve them; not silent, hiding our heads, sealing up our lips, and leaving the world to their own ways, but by an open declaration, at every proper season bearing testimony against them, that their works are evil; boldly rebuking vice by word as well as practice; having *no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness*, but separating ourselves from all intimate society with every brother who walketh disorderly, whose conversation agrees not with the simplicity of the gospel. This will make us singular, it is true; we shall be unlike the world, and displease the world; but wherefore did we meet at Christ's Table, but to make our solemn declaration to him, that *we are not of the world, even as he is not of the world?* and how shall we dare be so unfaithful, as to

go forth and mix again familiarly, and as bosom friends, with those who are *enemies to the cross of Christ, who glory in their shame, who mind earthly things?* To take up our cross, and follow Christ, was our sacramental vow. But how unfaithfully have many of you hitherto performed it? How utterly strangers are you this day to any reproach or shame for Christ's sake? Where is your cross that you have borne in the world? Alas! you go from the Lord's Table and return again to the world just as before, lost in its cares, pleasures and vanities; and how then should the world possibly have any quarrel with you? *Ye are of the world, and therefore the world loves its own.* You never by your professions disturb the slumbers or security of the unawakened souls around you; the form of a ceremonious duty will reprove nobody, unless there be afterwards something more of profession, than this mere act of communicating. But be sincere, and then you cannot escape; go into the world, speak as a christian, profess your views, live for Christ, and then the world and you will have no longer fellowship; for if you are thus chosen out of the world, the world cannot but hate you. Let this, brethren, comfort you who bear forth Christ's name in the world, as well as at his Table; the cross is an honorable badge, to

be reproached for righteousness' sake is happiness. The remembrance of our surrender to Christ, will make us count all things light and easy; and suffering as a christian, we need not be ashamed; *we know in whom we have believed;* we know under whose banners we have taken the Sacrament to fight; and God forbid we should quit our colors for shame, reproach, evil report, dishonor or reviling, yea, though we were called for his sake to prison or to death.

2. We must practice as we profess. Going forth to give up our whole bodies, souls and spirits to Christ, and to walk worthy the high vocation wherewith we are called, we should carry away with us impressed upon our hearts the vows we have made, that so whenever sin would tempt us, we may have this answer to make, *How shall I do this wicked thing, and sin against God,* who have but lately so solemnly given up myself to him? If Christ hath been pleased to take us for his own, shall we rob him of the purchase of his blood, and dishonor him who hath so highly exalted us? surely this would be as ungrateful as guilty. The eyes of the world will be upon us, and they are piercing and quick; if they see our conversation to be nothing different from their own, they will say, *What do ye more than others?* and what advantage will this give to the adver-

saries of the Lord to blaspheme? "These, "say they, are your Communicants; here "they are all devotion, but go home with "them from church, and you see them as "passionate and proud, as covetous and "worldly, as vain and trifling, as false and "deceitful, as any of their neighbors."— And if this be the case with any of you, brethren, what a curse will it bring upon you? what a disgrace will it be to your profession! and how will religion be wounded, even in the house of its friends, by your unbecoming conversation? May not the adversaries of the Lord then be hardened in their sins, and confirmed in their prejudices, whilst they see, under the outward cloak of profession, that rank hypocrisy lurks within; and saving outward appearance, that you are neither more humble, more holy, more mortified, more heavenly-minded than themselves? Surely it were better for such an one, unless mercy restore him, *that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the midst of the sea*, than that ever he approached the Table of the Lord. But if you would not have this heavy guilt lying upon our souls, then you must labor to *adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things*, by such an unblameable conduct, that they who seek occasion against you may be disappointed, and find no evil

thing justly to say of you. Your lives should be as the light of the morning, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, and your works such as may glorify your Father which is in heaven. Then, if men speak evil of your good conversation in Christ, these adversaries of the Lord shall be found liars; and all who will inquire even *here*, will detect their malice; and *in the great day of the Lord*, they shall be covered with confusion, and receive the reward of *lying lips and a deceitful tongue, in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

3. We must go forth particularly to exercise the duties of our respective stations and relations in life. Herein especially the power of religion is shown forth; a passionate master, a fretful mistress, a haughty husband, a self-willed wife, a cruel father, an undutiful son, a slothful servant, or a false friend, none of these can possibly have any pretensions to real Christianity. To suppose it possible, would be supposing a contradiction possible, that light and darkness, Christ and *Belial* could agree. Particular watchfulness will be needful. In every family lies the greatest proof of the sincerity of the members of it; they will prove their fidelity to Christ by their love one towards

another, shown in the conscientious discharge of their several relations; the master ruling with gentleness, the servant laboring with cheerfulness and fidelity; the husband kind and tender, the wife meek and obedient; the father mixing parental affection with correction, the son manifesting filial love with dutiful submission, and so in every other case. This will make our houses temples; and the charity, forbearance, patience and submission, shown one to another in such families, will be the most convincing proof that Christ really dwells under that roof: and such it is required of Communicants to be: and towards those who are without, the same spirit must show itself.

(1.) In the uprightness of all our dealings, in our intercourse with the world: *We shall not go beyond, or defraud our brother in any matter, but rendering to every man their dues, shall owe no man any thing.* We shall do our work as under the bonds of the covenant, *not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of the Lord, doing the will of God from the heart.* We shall deal with each other in the simplicity which is in Christ, renouncing every hidden work of dishonesty, and abhorring the appearances of fraud and injustice. And thus walking under an higher principle than the world is ever acquainted with, even under the eye, and as in the

presence of a heart-searching God, shall convince even those we cannot convert, that there is a power in the religion of Jesus Christ to do that which nothing upon earth can do besides.

(2.) We must show it in the meekness of our conversations. The power of religion is glorious, when it tames the impetuosity of our passions, softens our severity into mildness, and puts a bridle both on our hearts and tongues. Coming from the table of a meek and lowly Jesus, we must needs learn of him to be meek and lowly of heart, if we would find rest to unto our souls. It is strange hypocrisy to come with pretence of seeking *the wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated*, and going home to disturb all around us by our passions and perverseness; instead of gentleness, to be a lion in our house, and frantic among our servants; instead of easiness to be intreated, implacable and unmerciful; this is not to partake of the Table of the Lord, but the table of devils, for these are the dispositions of Satan. Let this thing, brethren, be seriously attended to, let it appear what Christ at his Table hath done for you, by the change wrought in your temper, by the mildness, sweetness, compassion, forbearance and gentleness of your conversation.

(3.) Be temperate in all things. In the *world*, that its anxious cares and concerns do not engage you immoderately. In your *body;* that you deny its cravings, *making no provision for the flesh*, by sloth, drunkenness, gluttony or pleasure, *to fulfil the lusts thereof: They that are Christ's, have* both *crucified the world and the flesh with its affections and lusts.* A worldly covetous Communicant, a drunken intemperate Communicant, a lewd and carnal Communicant, what can be so monstrous a thing? Can we receive the body of Christ in one hand, whilst we grasp the world in the other? Can the same eyes that have looked upon a crucified Saviour, indulge wantonness or be greedy of gain? Can these hearts that have been made the temples of the Holy Ghost, erect the altar of Mammon there, or entertain those vile affections which must defile the sacred place? Let it appear then that you are now no longer debtors to the flesh, to live after the flesh; that the *world is crucified unto you, and you unto the world;* that you have higher enjoyments than flesh or sense, and nobler prospects than earth can give you; and this may well make you dead to the love of worldly things, and temperate in the use of them.

(4.) Show forth your love to your brethren. *As good stewards of the manifold gifts*

of God, according as God hath given to every one, let him minister the same to him that lacketh. Do we abound in riches? let us abound also in liberality. Have we but little? let us *show our diligence to give of that little.* The trifle we contribute at the Table, should be as the first fruits, to sanctify our other gifts, in token that we do them all in Christ's name, and for his sake. But there are other and far greater demonstrations of love, which we are called to exercise towards our brethren, than the relief of their poverty, such as bearing the infirmities of the weak, condescending to the meanest, ready to help them with our presence, advice or influence, where any or all of these may be necessary; counting none beneath our notice or regard; seeing the unspeakable condescensions of Christ to us, who, *though he was in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal with God, yet humbled himself, and made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.* Have we really seen him come *not to be ministered unto, but to minister?* have we seen his love *in giving his life a ransom for us?* how ought we then to love one another, yea, to be ready to lay down, if need be, our lives for the brethren? for how dear ought those bodies to be to us, for which Christ's body was given? how

precious ought those souls to be in our eyes, for which Christ's soul *was sorrowful, even unto death?* This universal love to all, but especially to those *who are of the household of faith*, we must go forth to exercise, that so all men may know we are Christ's disciples, by that unfeigned affection we bear one towards another.

(5.) Our conversation after this ordinance should be more heavenly. What hath a Christian any longer to do among the tombs of this world, who is come from remembering a living, dying, risen and ascended Saviour? *Our conversation*, says St. Paul, *is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.* Have we there remembered his coming again? what have we then to do but to make ready for it, that our affections being set on things in heaven, not on things on earth, we may welcome the day of his appearance and glory. Here is the grand evidence of a Christian. Others direct all their aims, pursuits and designs after the things which are seen, and are temporal; he seeks always the things above, the things which are unseen to others, but realized by faith to him, and most important, because eternal. See that this be your experience, that every time you communicate, you find the effects of it thus evident, in lifting up your hearts after Christ in the

heavens; in quickening your preparation to meet him in the clouds, and continually making you more ready and disposed for that inheritance among the saints in light, which in the ordinance was sealed to you, and to which you were called.

Such should be our conversation after every sacramental occasion, that all who see us may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus; and behold from our walk the brightness of the grace communicated to us, making us shine as lights in the world, like *Moses'* face when he came down from the mount of vision. I would to God this was more the case; and that all that were joined to the Lord in bonds of outward communion with him, were thus one spirit with him; walked more as Christ walked. I am very sure it is the great grief of every truly Christian heart, whenever they behold the contrary, and see these spots at our feasts, *feasting themselves without fear, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.* May you and I fear for ourselves, and give greater *diligence to make our calling and election sure,* continuing to walk thus as persons professing godliness. In order to which, we shall find the following means most highly conducive; and I pray God you may have such desires thus to give up your hearts to God, as heartily to exercise your-

selves unto godlines in all the ways the Spirit points out to you; and these are chiefly,

1. WATCHFULNESS.
2. PRAYER.
3. The WORD.
4. The Company of LIVELY Christians.

1. To walk as becometh your Christian profession, you must be watchful. The enemies whom you renounce are mightier than you, wise, watchful and ensnaring. The devil continually spreads his toils, and is never perhaps busier with us than after such a season, when the fervor of devotion being somewhat abated, our hearts are more exposed to his attacks; then he would step in, tempt us to return unto folly, follow his insinuations with some bait laid in our way, and so work upon the remainders of corruption within us, in order to betray us into his hands. Thus after the sop, Satan entered into *Judas*. As not ignorant therefore of his devices, we should especially beware of security. *Let not him that putteth on the armor, boast as he who taketh it off.* When the cold turf covers our head, *then the wicked will cease from troubling, and the weary have perfect rest;* but here every step we take we are among lions, and must stand on our watch-tower, fearing always, and working out our salvation with that trembling and care which can only secure it. A holy

jealousy is the great preservative against falling away. The moment we begin to slumber, our watchful adversary is ready to take advantage against us: but *blessed is the man whom his Lord when he cometh shall find watching.*

2. Prayer is the greatest means of preserving the influence of this ordinance upon our hearts. This is closely connected with the former, watchfulness and prayer go together; we must pray that we may watch, and continue watching unto prayer. It is not enough once to draw nigh unto God, but we should daily be keeping near to him, and upon our knees in our closets acting over again that surrender which we have made at the Table. Prayer is the breath of the divine nature, of the new creation begun in us, and by it we should be offering up our souls daily to him, from whom cometh our salvation. By prayer we should seek to maintain an holy frame of spirit, appearing solemnly and frequently in secret in God's presence, that we may habitually walk under the sense of it. Whoever hath any experience of divine things, will find his constant need, and the gracious influence of earnest and importunate prayer; such an one cannot but pray, all his soul depends upon it, he knows he shall quickly grow careless the moment he becomes prayer-

less; and therefore he remarks the smallest decays in private prayer, stirs up his soul to the lively exercise of it, and pleads for the Spirit to blow up the fire of all holy graces in his heart. To neglect prayer, or to perform it with an habitual negligence and formality, is a most suspicious sign that all approaches to God at his Table were mere matters of form, the work of a day, not the spiritual exercises of the heart, desiring nearness to and communion with God; for where this is the case in one ordinance, it must be so in another: they who long to see Christ at his Table, are daily setting him before them, when they bow their knees at his footstool; and this both prepares the way before, and keeps alive the sense of what they have found at Christ's communion afterwards. Pray therefore, I beseech you, without ceasing, as you hope to stand fast, as you would be true to your engagements, as you profess the name of Christian, as you would walk as becometh your profession, as you would show forth the sincerity of your surrender to Christ by the discharge of your several relations in life, as you would have your conversation in heaven, I beseech you be diligent in private prayer; else you will dishonor your vocation, you will walk in disobedience, as do others, you will have your conversation upon earth, you will be

a slave to the world; and notwithstanding all you may do besides, your fall will be more dreadful, and your ruin most inevitable. You must pray or perish.

3. The word of God is another great means to keep us from falling. Herein we must exercise ourselves day and night. Out of it we must be taught the way wherein we must go. This must be *the guide to our feet, and the lanthorn to our paths;* and in our course to glory, be our map and chart. Communion seasons are places of refreshment in the way, to strengthen us for our journey: Christ in the Word is the way itself, in which after such refreshment we are to walk. To the Word therefore you must apply, to know more perfectly the mind of God, that you may follow it more faithfully; and if you have been sincere with Christ, you will do so; *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments;* you will keep the scriptures upon your heart, rising up and lying down; they will be daily in your hands at any season of leisure, and particularly before you set yourself to the exercise of prayer. This is the way to be taught of God, and instructed in the way that you should go. You will find thus your heart built up, more determined for Christ, and more stedfast in his service; having set his commandments ever before you, and

being stedfastly purposed through grace not to sin against them.

4. Lastly, The company of lively Christians is a choice means and wondrous help to keep alive the serious impressions made upon the soul: *As iron sharpeneth iron, so does the countenance of a man his friend.* Experience will best confirm the truth of this observation. Man is by nature social, needing the help of one another; and Christians more so than other men, who have new and stronger bands than nature to unite them, and have many enemies that none others know. To associate therefore for the purposes of religious improvement, is not more comfortable than necessary; *How can one be warm alone?* says the Prophet. But when we join to exhort, reprove, rebuke, and admonish one another, then the fire catches from heart to heart, each receives some quickening or consolation, or correction from the other's experience and conversation; and thus the communion of saints before the Lord is still maintained, till the season returns when we shall come together again in God's house, and renew the bonds of union and fellowship one with another. Let me therefore recommend it to you to seek the company of those, whose course and conduct is most holy, heavenly, and zealous; to be free one with another;

to open your hearts, as Christians, in that mutual confidence, which none but real Christians have any experience of, to delight in social prayer, and be desirous to join in it whenever you have opportunity. A conduct indeed, which, to those who know nothing of heart-religion, is always offensive and disliked; but which all, who have seriously set their souls to seek the kingdom of God in the first place, have found both most necessary to keep alive their holy purposes, and most conducive to the comfort as well as edification of their souls.

In this way you will always be going forward, and be growing in grace as in days, riper for glory as you advance towards it. You will be walking in an holy conformity to your profession, and approving your fidelity to Christ your Master. And thus from eating and drinking at Christ's Table below, you will shortly go to drink with him the new wine of eternal consolation in the kingdom of your Father.

CHAP. VI.

Directions for Prayer.

PRAYER is the desire of the soul after God, arising from a sense of want, and

expressing a dependance on his promises for a supply according to our necessities.

It is evident that the heart must be engaged, or there can be no prayer. The words of the lip, or the bending of the knee, are hypocrisy without this. The finest produce of the understanding, whether the composition of others or our own, is no better than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal, if the spirit of prayer be wanting. Whilst on the other hand, the simplest expressions, yea perhaps the most ungrammatical language, may convey the fervent desires of effectual prayer most acceptably, before the God *who trieth the heart and the reins.*

The most natural method of prayer is the artless language of the soul, dictated by want, and warmed with desire; and I suppose every soul, really awakened to feel his necessities, will be able, for the most part, to speak what he feels, without any assistance.

I commend extempore prayer, because I have not only my own experience, the experience of all living Christians, but the very reason of the thing to plead for it. Yet there are cases and circumstances wherein we may, no doubt, receive assistance from the labors of others; as *Aaron* was a mouth to *Moses*, so there may be helps to such are slow of speech.

In secret we should not exclude forms of prayer, though for the most part they are rather a clog, than a help to devotion, when solely made use of. They seem useful,

1. When used as a directory we place it before us, having first considered it as applicable to our state, and, in the exercise of prayer, enlarge upon the particular circumstances we are in.

2. At times we may find such a want of expression, as to need assistance of that kind, and may experience our hearts more quickened by it. Here the end of prayer being considered, what most promotes that is certainly best.

3. At first, having never been used at all to pray before, we may make use of the mouth of our neighbors to express our own case, and teach our lips a language, which the heart wants to utter.

But the great use of forms of prayer seems to be in social worship.

As prayer is the duty of every individual for himself in secret, so is it also enjoined on all Christians in their social relations.—The master of every family is bound by the religion of Jesus to make his house a house of prayer. When Christians meet together in private as well as in the congregation, prayer is the most proper and natural em-

ployment. Abundant evidence of this occurs in the New Testament.

The gifts of God are variously dispensed. Some have a facility of expression, and readiness of elocution, which is denied to others. Hence some can speak for others, without the assistance of a form of prayer, and this is undoubtedly the most profitable; for in this case, the knowledge of the peoples' state gives the person who prays an opportunity of adapting his requests more exactly to the case of those who join with him; besides, that there is something much more enlivening to devotion in such exercises, when done with propriety and judgment, than in the best composed forms.

But as these gifts of knowledge and utterance may not be possessed by many, who yet desire to pray with and for each other, there the spiritual assistance of some experimental Christian's prayer may be of the most abundant usefulness.* I confess I cannot but wish that some who take upon them to be mouths of others, had greater diffidence of themselves. To hear a man before others praying absurdly, improperly and incoherently, is as offensive to men, as

* As many sincere people, who stand in need of helps, either for private or social prayer, may be at a loss for proper forms, I would therefore recommend Mr. Jenks' Devotions, as by far the

it must be displeasing to God; and can serve only to show the pride, not the humility of the speaker, and the folly, not the teachableness of the hearers. Prayer must be ever a reasonable service; it ceases to be so when in such hands.

But the sloth of some, and too great concern of others, about the manner of acquitting themselves in prayer, are equally sinful. Instead of improving their gifts and graces, they continue servilely bound to a form, however in itself good. They, to whom it is given, should use to the honor of the giver the gift he bestows; but if we make not the trial, we cannot tell what our gifts are.

As every gift improves by exercise, so does the gift of prayer particularly. We know not what we can do till we try, and it is a certain fact that persons of very slender abilities, and who could scarcely express themselves clearly on any other subject, have obtained, by exercise in prayer, not only method, but propriety; and many a

most animated and spiritual of any I ever met with, and best suited both for families and the states and exigencies of particular Christians.—There are also in that Manual some excellent prayers and meditations for the assistance of pious Communicants, and a very sweet and devout paraphrase upon the Creed.

heart hath been warmed with the prayers of those whom the world hath accounted weak as well as illiterate. Every person therefore should make the attempt.

There is a shame and diffidence which usually attends the first essays, which may for a little while distract the attention, and make us too solicitous about the persons with whom we are, instead of being wholly taken up with the consideration of him to whom we speak; but this in general is soon got over by use. Mean time, I suppose it would be very profitable for such as begin the worship of God in their houses, or with their friends, to have before them some evangelical book of devotions, that if they found themselves confused, or barren of thought, they might recur to it, till they they had attained greater ease, and overcome that bashfulness which hurried them.

Where there is really not a gift of prayer, where persons are conscious that they cannot so profitably perform the exercise of devotion without the help of a composed prayer, there it would be sinful in them not to make use of it. I have heard of some, that because they could not pray extempore in their families, would not pray at all with them; which seems as absurd as to say, because I cannot feed my family with delicacies of my own providing, they shall starve;

though I might have made use of my neighbor's offers, who had broken his bread on purpose for my use.

It must be observed that there are persons who have much of the gift of prayer, who have not the spirit of prayer; these, like the ravens who fed Elijah, bring good food to those who join with them, whilst their own pride and vanity of their abilities is the carrion on which they feed themselves. Their prayers may be blessed unto others, but they are an abomination to God, and bring a curse upon their own souls.

It will be needless to say many things in commendation of prayer, either respecting its necessity or excellence. The soul, who is brought to a sensibility about his real state, feels both with an evidence which is beyond all that we can speak; and the soul who is yet dead in trespasses and sins cannot pray, though we should write volumes to persuade him to it. For *he that cometh to God must first believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.* All the miscalled prayers of unbelievers have no more of a spiritual service in them, than howling hath of harmony.*

* Whatever the author intended by this paragraph, we are not to suppose that impenitent sinners should not be exhorted to pray; for Simon the sorcerer was directed by Peter to pray, when he perceived him to be in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. *Note by the Editor.*

For the sake of those who have need of assistance, I have subjoined some few helps to prayer, which may be enlarged upon, and made particularly applicable to the case of those who use them; intimating by the way, that the more we unbosom the very thoughts and secrets of our souls to God, the more profitable will be the service.

Praying that a spirit of prayer and supplication may be poured out upon every soul into whose hands this book may fall, I commend them and it to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

AS no Communicant can live without daily application to a throne of grace, the hints about prayer above given have an evident connection with the subject of the foregoing chapters. I have only to observe farther, that in the specimen of a prayer which follows, I have descended from general confession to particular, from general wants to particular ones. Persons must examine themselves where their bosom sin lies, what graces they most need, what temptations they most labor under, and adapt any portion of what follows to their own state and circumstances; it being designed not so much as a

form, as to assist the infirmities of the weak.

¶ *If the following be used as an assistance for social worship, then the alteration of* we *for* I, us *for* me, our *for* my *or* mine, *is easily made; and in this case all the mention of particulars should be omitted, and the prayer confined to the general confessions and requests, omitting the particular ones where the blank spaces stand within hooks* [ ] *thus.*

¶ *You may observe several breaks, which may be considered as containing so many new heads of prayer. Thus you are to connect any parts of it, or omit as you see occasion.*

O THOU most High and most Holy, whose name is Jehovah, the all-seeing and heart-searching God over all blessed for ever; look down in mercy on a poor unworthy sinner, desiring to draw near the throne of grace in the name of the incarnate Saviour, and making mention of his righteousness only. *[No other hope hath my sinful soul, no other help I find but in him; for his dear sake regard my cries, and let my prayer enter into thine ears, O Lord my God.]

* Whatever is between hooks thus [ ] may be omitted without any hurt of the sense or connection; or if you choose to use any part of it, you may, as shall appear proper to your case.

[I come before thee acknowledging my sin; and my iniquities, Lord, would I not hide from thee. Indeed they cannot be hid, for from thee nothing is hid, nothing is secret. Yet, Lord, I have too long and too often covered myself with thick darkness, and neither saw nor desired to see the evil which was in me. Blessed be thy name, that thou hast caused the light to shine into my heart, and hast given me any knowledge of the hidden mystery of iniquity there.]

Behold, Lord, *I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me;* yet how little did I know of the evil of such a corrupted nature, and its exceeding sinfulness? it was hid from my eyes; but now I acknowledge I am vile, and abhor myself: I am altogether become abominable, there is no health in me; evil, and that continually and universally, hath reigned in me; my transgressions are many, mine iniquities testify also against me: when I reflect upon the days that are past, confusion covereth me; the flagrant violations of thy holy law in many instances witness against me; my sins in number exceed the hairs of my head; and yet, Lord, how small a part of them do I see! whilst in thy book they have been written, and not a word hath been in my tongue, but thou, Lord, knowest it altogether. [I remember, Lord, with partic-

ular condemnation my —.* And O that I might go down mourning to my grave under it, and abhor myself for ever for it, even when thou art pacified towards me for it.]

Enter not into judgment with me, lest I be utterly confounded. Shouldst thou try me, I must plead guilty before thee, and acknowledge my just desert to be the worm which dieth not, and the fire which is not quenched. Yea, Lord, thou wouldst be clear in thy uttermost condemnation, for thou dost righteously, but I have rebelled against thee.

Yet glorify thy name in mercy upon me, and according to those gracious promises in which thou hast caused me to put my trust, glorify thy Son in pardoning and saving such a wretch as I am. [Let it now appear, Lord, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin by its cleansing me; and, sprinkled therewith, may my poor soul be presented before thy throne with kind acceptance! This is all my salvation; I plead nothing but this, that Jesus died for me. In his blood, in his righteousness only dare I approach unto thee, O thou most worthy Judge eternal.]

* Here any particular sin which afflicts your conscience, or which you desire may more affect it, should be mentioned, and the particulars opened, that your heart may be more struck with the mention.

[Blessed be the name of my God for his unspeakable gift. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ! O strengthen my faith in his all-sufficiency, and let not the number or aggravations of my sins discourage me; but, Lord, make his glory, his obedience unto death, his cross, his crown, to pass before me, that I may without all doubt believe in the satisfaction of my Saviour, and find redemption in him.]

And thou, Lord of life and glory, come and take possession of my heart, take the purchase of thy blood, set up within me thy kingdom, and turn thou me, that so I may be turned. An helpless worm, the servant of sin, the sport of temptation, the bond slave of corruption, thou seest me. O break this yoke from off my neck, and bring me, Lord, into the liberty of the children of God. [Hast thou not redeemed us from all iniquity, to purify to thyself a peculiar people? Art thou not come to bend our hearts in submission to thy will, as well as to ransom us from death and hell? Here is my heart, Lord, take and fashion it to thy holy will.]

Behold, Lord, I groan, being burdened. Since thou hast called, I want to follow thee. But, O, I find that sin hangs heavy on my soul, my corruptions war against me, and trouble me; and my strength is as weakness before them. Help, Lord, or I perish!—

Come, exert thy power, and set the captive free! Enable me to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset me!

¶ *Here follows three of the great enemies of our souls, Pride, Lust, and Worldliness; no soul but hath need to cry mightily for power against them: though, according to our several tempers and states, some one of them will most especially endanger us; accordingly that part may be made use of, and the others shortened or passed over.*

Against Pride.

MY Pride thrusts hard against me that I should fall. [I find within me such high imaginations, such a readiness to resent, such warmth and hastiness of temper.] [I found this day my spirit hurt by the reflections of —, by the obstinacy of —, by the conduct of —, I murmured as if my lot was hard. I regarded with envy — greater successes, abilities, and advancement.]* Lord, cast down every imagination which exalteth

* These are some of the particular, yet universal workings of Pride. The specifying the time, and place, and persons, brings the remembrance of it more lively upon us, begets deeper humility, and awakens greater earnestness.

itself, and bring my thoughts into the obedience of Christ; make me content to be the last and the least. Bow me to submission to every dispensation, and keep me quiet under every provocation. [Make me ever to know myself to be vile earth, and a miserable sinner; that I may find my temper really corresponding with my words, when I confess myself to be nothing, less than nothing and vanity; content to be as low in others' eyes as I acknowledge myself to be in thine, and profess myself to be in my own.]

Against Lust.

SUBDUE the hateful Lusts which war against my soul. Thou seest, Lord, how this flesh striveth against the spirit; and how impotent I am to resist. *[Thou knowest how my heart departed from thee after —, how my eye wandered with unhallowed looks —, how my folly wrought in secret —, to bring forth fruit unto death.] O save me, Lord, from my sinful self; give me strength to restrain the wanderings of my desires; enable me to make a covenant with mine eyes; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, rather than speak unhallowed words of lewdness, and my hand cut off ere

* What follows between [ ] will afford place for any particularly humbling reflections.

it be reached out to sin. [It were better for me to die, Lord, than to dishonor thee and my own body.] O make me a clean heart! [Purify my desires, teach me to possess my vessel in sanctification and honor; and may my body, as well as my soul, be for thee, O Lord, presented unto thee as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service.]

Against Worldliness.

DELIVER me from the love of this present evil World. Lord, my heart is naturally earthly and sensual. [Thou knowest what a slave I have been to the unrighteous mammon, O wean me from the love of it; may I be crucified unto the world, and the world unto me.] [In my transactions with —, I found covetousness ready to make me unjust; in looking upon —, I felt the workings of concupiscence; my backwardness to give to —, who needed, condemns my worldliness; in my bargain with —, I did not enough consider him as myself.] Lord, enable me daily to resist all anxious cares and disquieting fears; subdue every covetous desire in my soul; make me more circumspect and conscientious in all my dealings, and may my daily care be not to lay up my treasure upon earth, but in heaven; by such an improvement of the talent which

thou hast intrusted with me, as may be most to thy glory, and the relief and comfort of my distressed fellow-creatures and fellow-christians.

O Lord, my strength as well as righteousness, enable me to walk before thee, and please thee; may I not only cease to do evil, but learn to do good; write thy laws in my mind, and put them into my heart. [Constrained by the views of thy amazing grace, may I cheerfully surrender my whole self to thee, to be employed in thy work, and devoted to thy service. Yea, Lord, I am thy servant, since thou hast loosed my bands; as bought with a price, may I glorify thee in my body and in my spirit which are thine, and] daily let the fruits of thy righteousness appear more abundantly in me, which are through thee, my Lord and Saviour, to the praise and glory of God.—[Thou knowest my wants and my barrenness, how weak and feeble are my graces, how cold my love, how doubting my faith, how lukewarm my zeal, how negligent my fear, and how imperfect all. Lord, strengthen me with might in the inner man, fashion my soul after thine own blessed image, and daily out of thy fulness give me to partake of the abundance of grace.]

¶ *Here follow petitions for particular graces.* I. *For Faith.* 1. *Under the accusations of guilt.* 2. *Under the workings of corruptions.* 3. *Under temptations.* 4. *Under afflictions. As you most need to exercise it under either of these views, you will find here assistance.*

I. A Prayer for Faith.

1. *Under a sense of guilt.*

O most merciful and gracious God, strengthen my faith in thy promises, that I may, without all doubt, cast my care upon thee, assured that thou carest for me. The remembrance of my past sins is grievous, [particularly —, and my heart sometimes is ready to fail.] Lord, enable me to believe that thou dost in Jesus abundantly pardon. May I see more of his all-sufficiency, that fear may be cast out, and that I may rejoice in the assurance that thou hast received me, and cast all my sins behind thy back. Yes, Lord and Saviour, I dare not dishonor thee more than I have already done, by distrusting thee. I know thou art able to save to the uttermost; thy blood can atone for all; I believe, help thou mine unbelief.

2. *Under the workings of corruption.*

I am oppressed with corruption, a body of sin and death compasses me round about. [Deep calleth unto deep, and I am ready to say I am cast out of thy sight, particularly ——, against which I have strove and prayed, and over which I have mourned, returns with new violence, and brings me almost to despair.] See, Saviour, my helpless soul at thy feet; O raise me up, support me, enable me to lay hold of thy strength, and to trust, that I may not be confounded. O give me faith, that I may overcome.—Lord, I know it is my unbelief which makes my bondage; break thou the chain, and set my soul at liberty.

3. *Under temptations.*

Temptations beset me sore; they thrust at me, that I should fall; but in thee is my help. [Thou seest, Lord, how my path is compassed about; and how, through the violence of the attack, the corruption of my own vile heart, and my unbelief, iniquity prevails against me.] [* It did so at such a

* I mention here the prevalence of temptation, because I fear there are few real Christians who have not cause to lament their falls, as well as to ask strength to keep them from falling. Spread-

time —, in such a place —, in such company —, under such circumstances —: and though, Lord, from the bottom of my soul thou knowest it is my burden, yet how shall I stand?] Let thine everlasting arms be under me, lift up these hands which hang down, let my eye be fixed on thee, strengthen me, fulfil thy promises, confirm my heart to trust that wilt support me under my temptations, or make a way for me to escape from them.

4. *Under afflictions.*

My worldly trials are heavy, [I am afflicted in my person by —, sickness in my family —, injuries from others —, loss or reproach —, unkindness from those who are so near and dear —, disappointments, &c.*] Lord, thou canst make them work together for my good; may my heart stand fast in thee; enable me to believe thy kind intentions towardsme, that I may not only submit with patience, but rejoice in hope.

II. A Prayer for the Love of God.

Enlarge my affections towards thee, O thou chief of ten thousand, and altogether

ing our temptations openly before the Lord, and and expressly mentioning the circumstances of them, is of especial use to the tempted.

* Particulars must be mentioned.

lovely. What hast thou not done to engage my heart? ungrateful as I have been, may I be so no more. May my soul be inflamed with love unfeigned towards thee, beholding thy love, may it kindle mine; and daily as I receive fresh instances of it from thee, may my returns of gratitude be more abundant. [Open my eyes to see more and more the love wherewith thou hast loved me; make me to know more of its height and length, and breadth and depth; make me to see more of my own baseness and vileness, that thy dealings with me may more abundantly impress and constrain my heart.] O that I might love thee with a perfect heart. Lord, may I be increasing in love, till seeing thee as thou art, I shall love thee as I ought.

III. A Prayer for Fear.

Lord, put thy fear into my soul; be thou ever sanctified in me; let me ever tremble before, and dread to offend thee. May the sense of thy omniscience and nearness ever overawe my soul; when sin would tempt, may I remember that thou art present; may my fear be as my love, filial; may thy displeasure be more grievous to me than the punishment; and may I hate to offend thee, because thou art my good and gracious Fa-

ther, more than because thou art withal the just and righteous Judge.

IV. A Prayer for Charity.

God of all mercy, whose nature and name is love, and who hast taught, in amazing manifestations of it in thy Son, what are thy regards towards the children of men, teach me to love others, as thou hast loved me. O give me bowels of mercy, kindness, gentleness, meekness. Alas, for this selfish heart of mine! it is so ready to kindle under provocation, to resent unkindness, and to be unfeeling towards others' weakness and wants. [Such a person particularly my vile heart is ready to dislike —, &c.* Lord, take this uncharitable spirit from me.] Enable me to forgive, as thou for Christ's sake hast forgiven me. [May my censures all fall upon myself, where they are most due, that I may have none to cast on others.] Incline my heart to excuse the faults of others, to think no evil, and to hope all things favorable for them. According to the ability thou hast given me, may I readily communicate thy gifts according to the necessities of my brethren. [Make my heart more

* Nothing serves more effectually to subdue our resentment against any particular person, than praying for them by name.

tender to them, and sympathizing with their distresses, whether of body or soul.*] May their sins grieve me more deeply, and call forth my prayers and my tears over them. Lord, give them repentance who know thee not, [particularly —† who are so near and dear to me.] [May I not suffer sin upon them unrebuked; and may my conduct as well as my conversation be reproving and exemplary.] Give me a mouth to comfort the afflicted. May whatever talents thou hast lent me of knowledge or utterance, be employed, so as may be most subservient to the good of men's souls, and particularly of those with whom I am more immediately concerned. May my hand be ‡ opened to relieve the indigent according to my power; and as a good steward of thy gifts, enable me conscientiously to be concerned not only

* Men's souls are the greatest objects of charity.

† Unconverted friends and relations should never be forgotten by us.

‡ Though almsgiving be but a branch of charity, we must see that we abound in the exercise of it, if we are indeed in the faith; and by the way it must be observed, that as it will require some pains to inquire out the truly necessitous, this is as much a part of the duty as the gift itself; many, for want of being at the pains of this, often encourage idleness, instead of relieving real objects of charity, and thus rob the needy of their portion.

to give, but to bestow it in such a way as may be most to thy glory, the relief of real indigence, and the support of the helpless. Make me not only liberal, but glad to give, and ready to distribute, that the blessing of a cheerful giver may be through thy grace upon me. [And accept, O Lord, these small returns of humble acknowledgment, as offered in my dear Redeemer, in whose name alone is my hope, and in whose blood I desire my best offerings to be washed, and in whose righteousness I desire my best services to be arrayed, that they may come up with acceptance on thine altar, O God.]

V. A Prayer for Humility.

Give me, O Lord, the genuine humility which thou delightest in. Let an abiding sense of my vile self and sinful services be ever on my heart. When the deceiver would cause me to compare myself with myself or others, O may my soul still turn to thy holy law, and be confounded before thee in dust. And when the gifts thou hast bestowed on me would puff me up, let me remember not only that they are received, but what an abuse hath been made of them, and how much cause I have for confusion, instead of glorying before thee.

VI. A Prayer for Zeal.

Awaken greater zeal for thy glory in my heart: how lukewarm and insensible to thy interests in the world have I been, and am I still? Lord, give me a deeper sense of thy majesty, and a more enlarged knowledge of the value of immortal souls, that I may rise up against the evil doers, grieving to see thee dishonored, and deeply concerned to pluck those brands from the burning.—[Lord, may I cheerfully suffer, count no cross grievous; and where duty calls, boldly rebuke vice, whatever danger be incurred. Arise, O Lord God, and vindicate thine own cause; where is thy zeal and the soundings of thy bowels, are they restrained? See our desolations, and come with great might and succor us.]

Intercessions, *general and particular.*

And, Lord, hear my poor supplications for others as well as for myself. Thou seest what desolations are wrought in the earth, how sin covers the face of the world, and gross darkness the people: O send out thy light and thy truth, that the ends of the earth may remember themselves, and be turned unto thee, O Lord. Especially visit our land with thy salvation; we have the form

of godliness, and the profession of thy gospel; but, O how far removed from the practice and the power of it! Return, O God of hosts, return, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us. [Remove not our candlestick away, as by our manifold iniquities we have most justly provoked thee to do, but remember thy mercy which hath been to a thousand generations, and hear the prayers of thy people, who cry day and night before thee.] Raise up thy power, and come among us, and with great might succor us. Send out, we pray thee, laborers into thine harvest; the land mourneth, the people perish for lack of knowledge; give them pastors after thy own mind, who may exalt the cross of the Redeemer, and be successful preachers of his righteousness: bless the few who truly labor in the word and ministry; may thy grace make thy word in their mouths effectual for the conviction, conversion, and consolation of men's souls; particularly bless him who ministers to my soul, and may he see of the fruit of his labor in me, and multitudes be brought by his teaching to the knowledge of the salvation which is in Jesus Christ. Lord, make us more diligent, that our profiting may appear under the blessed means of grace which we enjoy. Bless all those who are

especially near to me under any ties of relations; may all my friends be thine; my benefactors find in thy favor an abundant return, and those of this house and family be the objects of thy peculiar regard.*

And now, Lord, accept my humble praise for all the mercies I have tasted, from the first day even until now; unworthy indeed, utterly unworthy of the least of them I confess myself to be. Blessed be thy name for the being I enjoy, and for all the blessings of time which accompany it; but above all, blessed be the name of my God for his redeeming love, for Jesus the fountain of grace, and for the great and precious promises, given freely in him to me a sinner. Blessed be thy name for the knowledge of him, whom to know is everlasting life; for all the means of growth in grace, and all the hopes of the glory purchased, taken possession of, and to be revealed by and in the Lord Jesus my Saviour; whose righteousness is my title, whose blood is my plea, and who is to me all and in all. In his name and words I would, since he hath commanded it, sum up all my imperfect prayers, saying, *Our Father*, &c.

* The particular states of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, will afford opportunity for more particular enlargement.

You have here a long prayer, which may be easily shortened and adapted to your state, whatever it be: remember only that your eye in all your prayers never lose sight of the Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous, in and through whom alone any answer of peace can be given to your requests. All blessings in time and eternity are the purchase of his blood on the cross; they are given into his power, as the peculiar head of the mediatorial kingdom; and are to be obtained by that intercession, which he ever liveth to make for his people.

As the foregoing prayer is intended as a help to the sincere in general, it may be useful to add something particular of the same kind respecting the Lord's Supper; which, with some Meditations on select passages of scripture, may serve to enliven our souls before and at this ordinance.

A Prayer before the Lord's Supper.

Dear Saviour of my soul, look upon the sinner thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood. I come because thou hast bidden me, and my soul needeth the refreshment thou hast provided. Never do I draw near, but I bring with me fresh cause of humiliation, and carry new burdens to thee, my Lord, from which I need relief.

Look upon me in thy wonted compassion, and pity and pardon all the faithlessness with which I stand chargeable before thee. Jesus, my hope is in thee. Ten thousand times have I forfeited all the mercies of my God, but thou hast been my Advocate, thy blood hath spoken for me; still, Lord, let it speak, and sprinkled on me, purge my heart from dead works to serve the living God. Bleeding Lamb of God, thy open wounds afford a safe retreat to my poor soul. I fly to thee to hide me. Let my iniquities be covered, let my backslidings be healed. My deep complaints come up before thee; this body of sin, when shall my soul be delivered from it? Lord, mine eyes are unto thee. I have found renewed attacks from my corrupt and vile affections;* to the blessed fountain opened for sin and uncleanness I fly; O wash this spotted soul, and heal the leprosy within. When now again I am drawing near to thee, draw near to my sinful soul. Strengthen my confidence in thy love, when I partake of the instituted pledges thou hast left me. O comfort me with the assurance that thou art mine. Teach these eyes with tears of penitence and joy to look upon thy broken body; give me thus that repentance

* Particulars must be enlarged upon, according to your latest temptations and most besetting corruptions.

unto salvation never to be repented of. O, my Lord, conquered by thy dying love, may every lust be offered up a willing sacrifice at thy cross; take them, Lord, slay them before thee; consume the dross of base affections, purify my soul, and with this sacred fire refine it like thine own.

Anointed Jesus, save me from every sin; set up within my soul thy kingdom of righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost; reign over a willing subject, and let thy service be ever the happy freedom of my soul. O what bondage, Lord, like the bondage of corruption; what liberty so sweet as that which they enjoy, who take up thy light burden, thy easy yoke. Thou askest nothing from me which it is not my happiness to renounce; thou commandest nothing wherein it is not my happiness to obey thee. O then let me count nothing grievous which thou dost enjoin: anew I would make my surrender unto thee; again would I solemnly seal my soul for thine own; enable me to approve myself more faithful to the vows which are upon me, and live more devoted to thee who hast died for me.

Thou knowest, Lord, my simpleness, and my faults are not hid from thee; thou knowest it is the desire of my soul to love and please thee; it is my bitterness that I ever

offend thee: O when shall I have done with sin? when shall I grieve no more thy Spirit in me? O Lord, when shall it yet be? Continue to be gracious; draw me nearer to thy blessed self, that I may run more eagerly after thee; show me more of thy beauty, that sin may grow more hateful in my eyes; lay thy hand upon me, and fashion me; O fashion me, dear Redeemer, in thy own blessed image, and make me wholly such as thou wouldst have me to be. Make thyself known unto me in the breaking of bread; reveal thyself to my poor soul as thou dost not to the world; make me to taste the comforts of thy regard, that I may be enabled for all thy service; and open my eyes to heavenly things; when I remember thee on the cross, may I look to thee also on the throne, and feel the weight of thy expected appearance continually influential over me. O Saviour, that I may then be found of thee in peace, and meet thee on thy throne of judgment with kind acceptance and regard! Thou wilt come, I know thou wilt, and wilt not tarry. O Lord Jesus, may I be ever looking for, and hasting unto the day of thine appearing, and be found watching, when thou shalt stand at the door and knock.

Receive my thanks, dear suffering Saviour, thou compassionate High-priest, who canst be touched with the feeling of thy

people's infirmities, blessing and praise be ever thine. Help me daily to be telling of thy salvation, till thou shalt give me a place with those blessed spirits of the just made perfect, whose happy labor is everlasting songs of thanksgiving to thee, who wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, and made us kings and priests, that we might reign with thee in thy kingdom for ever. *Amen.*

It is supposed that every Communicant walks in a continual course of self-examination. The temper described in chapter III. will afford the most interesting points of inquiry. As we shall ever find how short we come of that blessed disposition there described, we shall have continual need for new confessions of sin and unfaithfulness, with renewed purposes of heart of cleaving to the Lord. If any thing particularly humbling hath befallen us, or any new temptation beset us, we must spread it before the Redeemer, and pour out our griefs into his compassionate bosom: he is a kind Saviour, we know little of the depths of his bowels and mercies; if we did, we should never dishonor him as we do with our distrusts, and should be more deeply melted down under the sense of his amazing patience and love. One view of Christ in his transcendantly graciously character, as the dear Redeemer

of lost souls, hath more power and efficacy to break the bonds of sin, and urge us to obedience, than all the vows, promises and resolutions, wherewith we can bind our souls.

CHAP. VII.

On Meditation.

AT the Lord's Table, and before we go to it, a most profitable exercise is divine Meditation; nothing serves more to spiritualize and enliven the soul, than the consideration of some of the great and precious promises, that in Jesus Christ are made to us; or of those blessed portions of scripture that more immediately speak of him whom our soul loveth; declare his offices, describe his sufferings, or point us to the glory which followed; they are too numerous to be collected: I will select a few as heads of Meditation, which I shall endeavor to enlarge upon, and refer you to many others, which will afford like profitable improvement.

The interval which we spend during the celebration of the Lord's Supper, should be

usually most employed in this way. By this means our devotion at the ordinance itself is kept from languishing, and we accustom ourselves more habitually to that communion with God, which should be our daily walk.

MEDITATION I.

GENESIS iii. 15.

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel.

HOW wondrous the compassions of God to fallen man! he left him not to despair; he slew him not in his sin; he pitied, he pardoned. See in this first promise, O my soul, how unwilling the Lord is that we should perish. A beam of light and hope breaks through the darkness, and revives the guilty soul of man; he saw and believed; and shall I be now faithless? The true light hath shined, the sun of righteousness is arisen with healing in his wings; I see him not through a glass darkly, but as it were face to face, beholding the promise

fulfilled by his appearing in the fulness of time. What confidence, then, my soul, should inspire thee, when here before thine eyes thou seest the serpent's head bruised by the sacrifice of the woman's seed? O Saviour, let me adore thy grace, and rest satisfied in the glorious victory thou hast obtained. Thou wast manifest to destroy the works of the devil; O fulfil in me this great design of thy coming, bring near thy cross to my heart, and bruise at thy feet whatever is serpentine and diabolical in this fallen nature; make me to know by experience of the effectual working of thy mighty power, that thou art this promised seed.—Let me stand a monument of thy grace on earth, and bring me as a trophy of thy victory to heaven.

MEDITATION II.

Psalm lv. 6.

And I said, O that I had wings like a dove: for then would I fly away, and be at rest.

WHAT a wearisome world is this! sin and sorrow compass me about; though some sweet drops of heavenly consolation

at times revive my soul, yet how often hangs my harp on the willows, and how often is my head bowed down as the ears of corn with drops of dew? Lord, thou hast told me of a blessed rest which remaineth for the people of God; thou hast drawn me to look up to it, to pant after it; had my soul wings to fly to thy bosom, how swiftly would I pierce the skies? No timorous dove darting from the rapacious vulture, seeks so eagerly its covert, as my poor heart should fly from these sublunary evils, to that shadow of thy wings, where is everlasting rest. When shall it yet be, dear Lord, that my weary soul shall find in thee repose? Hide me in the cleft of the rock; in thy bleeding side may my sinful soul now find a safe retreat; give me the wings of faith, that I may fly to this relief from the pursuit of divine justice and a consuming law; and when this clog of earth that weigheth down my soul, shall be shook off in the dust, and my imprisoned spirit disentangled from the clay, then let the wings of love direct my flight to the heaven where thou art; and, close sheltered by thy once bleeding side, let me bid an eternal adieu to sin and sorrow. Be patient, my soul, yet a little while, and hope unto the end; he, that is faithful and true, saith, *I will give thee rest.*

MEDITATION III.

PSALM CXIX. 94.

I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

YES, Lord, I am thine by every tie; thine by Creation, thine by Providence, thine by Redemption, thine by Grace, thine by every obligation of Love, thine by repeated and solemn surrenders of myself unto thee, wholly thine am I forever bound to be; yet how sacrilegiously have I alienated from thee what was thine; how often have I faithlessly dishonored thee, and broken the vows which were upon me; how like a broken bow have I started aside, and still, Lord, my vile heart, how prone is it to wander from thee? How shall I render to thee thine own? How shall I approve myself to thee? Save me, it must be thy own work; without thee I can do nothing to please thee: save me from myself, from my sins, from my corruptions, from my weakness, visit me with thy salvation. If thou set my heart at liberty, then shall I run in the paths of thy commandments: Lord, they are righteous, just and good; I delight in them after the inner man. O that my ways were

made so direct, that I might walk in them for ever; O that I could do thy will on earth, as it is done in heaven. Prepare me for the blessed service above, by daily power communicated from thee, to walk in thy ways here below.

MEDITATION IV.

PSALM lxxiii. 25.

Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.

LORD, what is heaven but thy favor and reviving presence? what is hell but thy absence and displeasure? the glory of thy sanctuary is thy blessed self, without thee those shining mansions would be desolate; thou art there, and there to bless thy people with the enjoyment of thyself; when shall I see thee face to face? when shall my heaven come, to awake up in thy likeness, to behold the transforming glory of thy countenance? O Lord, for thee my soul longeth, to be where thou art, and as thou art. O heaven, heaven, my God is there, he that is the strength of my heart, and my portion

for ever; if thou art mine, (and that thou art, thy promises have given me most reviving assurance) if thou art mine, what can I ask for more or wish beside? Lord, thou art all-sufficient. Whilst here I linger out the moment allotted me, though distant, too distant from thee, thou shalt be still my joy and my hope. What rival would steal away my affections from thee? what earthly object would intrude and rob thee of my love? Lord, there is nothing upon earth I desire in comparison of thee; wealth, honor, and pleasure tempt me away, but what can they give me in exchange for thee? are they not loss and dung? are they not in the balances lighter than vanity itself? Think, my foolish heart, when thou inclinest to listen to the syren's song, which on earth ensnares poor souls in perdition and destruction, think of thy better portion; live on him who is alone able to supply the void within, and from the never failing streams which flow from the fountain of all consolation, will replenish thee day by day, till from the streams thou comest to the fountain head, receivest the fulness of thy desires, and dwellest in God, and God in thee.

MEDITATION V.

CANTICLES viii. 14.

Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices.

REMEMBERING here thy death till thy coming again, I wait for thy appearance. Lord, I know thou wilt come, and wilt not tarry. O that my soul may meet thee, as a bride adorned for the bridegroom. I call thee my beloved, and art thou not such to me? thy love to me constraineth my soul, thou chief of ten thousand, thou altogether lovely. Why are thy chariot wheels so long a coming? I look upwards, and start at my own desires; how shall I appear before him, how shall I be regarded of him? black as the tents of *Kedar*, defiled my garments, and false to my Lord, as I have been, can I wish for his arrival? He hateth putting away; he is compassionate and kind; he pities, he pardons; he saith, Return unto me, and I will return unto you. Lord, I come to thee; array me in thy comeliness, remove my filthy garments, call me thine own, and take thy spotless robes of righteousness, and adorn my soul, and then has-

ten thy coming, my beloved. Sweet are the mountains of spices, where in thy ordinances thou hast left a savour of thy blessed self; sweet is the repast which here thou hast provided for my soul, but sweeter far will be the feast, when thou shalt favor the table with thy real presence; and, like the bounding hart that rushes from the mountain's steep, come down to me, and catch me up to meet thee in the clouds; there better spices breathe their fragrance, for thou art there; and where thou art, all blessing must abound. Haste then, and bring me to the holy hills, where thou my Lord dwellest, and fill me with the joy of thy everlasting love.

MEDITATION VI.

Canticles i. 3.

Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

THY name, dear Lord, is sweeter to my soul than fragrant ointment to the faint and weary. Jesus! what music to the sinner's ears! the dearest, greatest, sweetest name, that heaven or earth affords. What name like thine sheds joy and blessing on

the holy souls above? what name like thine diffuses peace and hope on guilty souls below? thou art the all in all. Make me, Lord, to taste and see how gracious thou art; shed abroad in my heart a sweet savour of thy ointment; from thee, my glorious priest, let the precious balm run down on me the meanest of thy members; I am called by thy name, let me partake of thine anointing. I love thee, O Lord my Saviour, I wish to love thee more. My heart, O that it might be a chaste virgin's heart for thee, nor wander after other lovers: bind my affections to thee stronger than death; one spirit with thee may I henceforth be: in mystic union join me to thyself, and in that train may I be found of virgin souls, that, separated from the defilements of the world, of flesh and sense, follow thee, thou lamb of God, whithersoever thou leadest them.

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MEDITATION VII.

PSALM lxxiv. 1, 2.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

YES, Lord, thy tabernacles are indeed amiable to my soul; I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord. Thy servant *David* at a distance longed, yea, even fainted with desire for these gracious opportunities I enjoy: how thankful should I be, that I can thus draw near thee; so often enjoy the welcome, returning sabbaths, and meet so often at thy table with my brethren and my companions. Lord, raise up then my longings after thee more fervently; let my heart and flesh cry out more intensely for thee: thy tabernacles are only amiable when thou dost manifest thyself in the midst of us; thy courts are then adorned, when thou, O King, appearest in thy galleries, *Cant.* vii. 5. Thy table is a feast indeed, when thou comest in to see the guests, and givest the welcome benediction. To day, my Lord, draw near to bless me;

awaken my thankfulness, open my lips, that my mouth may show forth thy praise; raise up my heart to thee in the heavens; from the tabernacles of thy grace, may my ascending soul mount up to the tabernacles of thy glory. How amiable these, O Lord, when shall I come to appear among the shining host which dwell for ever there! When shall my soul abide in this temple for ever, and go out no more? Thou God of my life, who hast given me to desire to see thee, thou wilt not disappoint the desires thou hast kindled. In my flesh shall I see God. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

MEDITATION VIII.

LUKE xxiii. 33.

DRAW near, my soul, and see this great sight; this is thy God who bleeds for thy iniquities; see him led like a malefactor through the streets of Jerusalem, and nailed like a murderer to expire on a tree; because thou deservest all this shame, and pain and death, therefore he endures it for thee. Look into his wounded temples, and see how deep the thorns have pierced; his face is marred more than any man's, black with

buffetings, and foul with blood; his weary head hangs down, and mingles tears with clotted gore: yet, thou dear Redeemer, thy beauty then is fairest, when thou appearest most defiled; these tears, this blood, these sorrows, are my peace, my joy, my everlasting consolation. Look up, sinful soul, and love a dying Saviour! See his hands extended wide, they open to embrace thee, I see them dropping down most precious streams of blood; they are iron bound, but his love will break the chain, and stretch them forth to lift me to his throne! They now are cancelling my deadly debt, my bond of suffering is nailed with them, and torn; I see in the deep wounds of his hands, graven as with an iron pen in a rock, a pardon written with blood. Yes, Lord, I believe the chastisement of my peace is upon thee, and that by these pains I shall be healed.—I look upon thy feet, Lord; they cannot as usual carry thee about doing good, but they tread now on their last weary step, and next will stand upon the everlasting hills; tired with the way, mortality hath often longed for rest; briars and thorns have torn them in the desert, and rugged paths afflicted them: but no thorns so sharp, no path so rugged as this, and no rest so needed as that sleep of death, when pain shall torment no more.—How have I trod the dreadful paths of sin?

how have my feet carried me from God to every vile indulgence? I see my punishment in thee; and O that with tears I might bedew those deep and deadly nail-prints, that tell me at once my crime and my forgiveness. What ghastly wound gapes wide beneath the heart, and pours down this crimson torrent of mingled blood and water! that bloody spear declares the cause; how deep it hath gone; indignity offends the corps, when pain can do no more. It is well. It became him to suffer these things, but why? my guilt had made it needful; yes, my soul, thou mayst regard with astonishment the sufferer, and with detestation the authors of this black deed; but if thou wilt see the origin, knock at thy breast, and there the murderers dwell: this sinful nature, these vile affections, this deep rebellion against the majesty of heaven, these brought the Lamb of God to such ignominy, torment, and death. Here then at his cross let my indignation rise; here then let an holy revenge burn within my heart, here let not mine eye pity, nor my hand spare; these his enemies, his murderers, I will bring them forth, and slay them before him. Lord, let me keep back nothing from thee, who gavest thyself to such suffering for me.

MEDITATION IX.

HEBREWS vi. 18.

That we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

WHAT grounds of consolation doth the scripture propose to the afflicted soul? Hunted by the devouring Law, trembling beneath the sword of Justice, unable to escape the stroke I could not endure, mercy sets before me an open door, and like *Jael* to *Sisera* (but with a much more gracious intention!) invites me, faint and weary, to repose my soul under her shadow. The guilty soul, exposed to wrath eternal, here sees a beam of hope arising, and our fears, like morning clouds, pass away. Blessed be he, who hath opened and consecrated this new and living way for the despairing and desperate, through a Mediator's broken body; to this sure refuge will I fly: Lord, help me to enter in, that I may dwell in safety; let pardoning love fast bar the gate against an accusing conscience and a condemning law; let thy faithfulness and truth be as a brazen wall around me, that none of my fears may break through, none of my sins destroy me.

Let thy power keep the strong hold of my heart, that no son of violence may hurt me: thus let my city of refuge be kept from every avenger, and under thy shadow let me sit, not only with safety, but great delight. Thou hast spoken, and who shall disannul it? thou willest me to be comforted, and why shall I refuse the consolation? Strengthen thou my faith, Lord, that my joy may abound.

MEDITATION X.

HEBREWS x. 38.

If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

THE scriptures are full of warning; take notice, my soul, and with holy jealousy work out thy salvation with fear and trembling. How dangerous to draw back! better never have known the way of righteousness. Yet how common these departures from the faith; how many have I known, who seemed to begin in the spirit, and have ended in the flesh? set up, my soul, these pillars before thee in this our plain of *Sodom*. *Lot's* wife may be seen in every street: what is there to engage thee to turn

back, or cast a lingering look behind? The world from which thou art called is a vain shadow, it is unsatisfactory in the enjoyment, it perisheth in the using, and it stands only as some mighty pile of fuel to be destroyed by the fire. The creatures of it are vain; its indulgencies, what fruit do they bring? and how like husks do its most gilded baits disappoint our appetite? count then the cost. Lord, my soul looketh unto thee; hold me by my hand, that I may not depart from thee. I have such a foolish, such a backsliding heart, that if left but a day to myself, I shall turn aside; but thou, who hast led so far, wilt not now let me go; by thee only can I be holden up; my heart is in thine hand, thou shalt preserve me from the power of the enemy, thou shalt teach me the way wherein I should go, thou shalt guide me with thine eye. I know, Lord, none can pluck me out of thy hand; I will trust therefore, and not be afraid; though thousands fall on every side, thou art my shield and rock of defence. Much have I experienced of thy kindness and care, more I believe thou hast in store. I wait for thy salvation, and I have a good hope because of thy word; here my anchor fixes. If thou say, I will put my fear into thine heart, and thou shalt not depart from me; then may I with confidence rest upon thy grace and love.

MEDITATION XI.

1 Cor. vi. 20.

For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

IF any thing can engage my heart to the dear Redeemer, it must be the views of his amazing love and grace, and the sense of the deep obligations these lay upon me; when I see the price he hath paid for me, how can I except to his claim? It hath cost thee precious blood to redeem me from my state of endless misery, and now thou challengest the return of service. Lord, I am thy servant; I am thy servant, for thou hast loosed my bands; I will, through thy grace, make thy glory my great aim and end. I have lived long to dishonor thee, henceforth may thy name be exalted in me and by me; my body is for thee, O Lord, it hath served divers lusts and pleasures, but thou hast redeemed it from the guilty service. It shall serve no more; every sense, every member, let it be an instrument of righteousness unto God. My spirit is thine: its passions, its vile affections, shall reign no more; let

purity be written on my inmost soul, and my thoughts be brought into obedience to thee, O Christ. Yet, Lord, after all, what glory can redound to thee from such worthless services as mine? that thou condescendest to accept them, brings me in more thy debtor still. Well, Lord, I am more than content, I am happy thus to be rendering myself to thee, and increasing thereby my obligations; glorify thyself in me in mercy, till thou glorify me with thyself in the kingdom of thy glory.

MEDITATION XII.

TITUS ii. 10.

That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

GOD is my Saviour; that he is God, is my comfort, for now I know his all-sufficiency of power and love, able to save to the uttermost, and rich in mercy to all that call upon him. I am called to adorn that doctrine which bringeth salvation, and teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; and it is my serious pur-

pose and desire to do so. My character in the world will call for my first regard, to walk in wisdom towards those who are without; to show an unblameableness of conversation, that they who are of a contrary part, may have no evil thing justly to say of me. I will labor to show all good fidelity in my dealings, to pay a conscientious regard to truth in my words, to provide things honest in the sight of all men, to be industrious in my calling, to owe no man any thing, to abstain from the appearances of evil, lest I make my brother to offend. My behavior in my family, may it be ever such as becometh godliness; I would go in and out before them, as an example unto the believers. I would watch particularly against self-will and anger: I would always speak at my meals something which should be for the use of edifying. I would be constant in prayer with them day and night, that the blessing of God may be in the midst of us. I would watch over all around me with a jealous eye, and above all, over myself, that I lay no stumbling-block in their way; I would instruct them to the best of my abilities in the knowledge of the Redeemer of sinners, and seek that I and my house might serve the Lord. In my particular transactions with God in secret, I will endeavor to lay bare my heart before him; I will take

his holy word; I will ask for his illuminating Spirit; I will examine mine own self; no bosom sin, I trust, shall find a hiding place: my burdens of sin and sorrow will I lay at the feet of my Lord. I will plead with him his promises, and leave my case in my great Advocate's hand. In this way the desire of my soul will be answered, and my Redeemer honored. Lord, adorn me with thy Spirit, that I may thus adorn thy gospel.

MEDITATION XIII.

HEBREWS vii. 25.

He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.

SALVATION is my great concern; I am the creature of a day; my body is of the dust, and returning to the dust again; I am in jeopardy every hour. Here I have no abiding city; as a tenant at will, I may be dismissed at a minute's warning: but I have an immortal soul, a soul that must be happy or miserable to eternity; a soul that must join angels in glory, or fiends in darkness. How weighty then is the concern of

salvation? and how important each moment that shortens the span allotted me below?

When I look within myself, how far from salvation doth my state appear? A sinner I, vile and abominable; in nature at enmity with God, in practice a transgressor times beyond number; under guilt which I cannot remove, under corruption I cannot subdue, under wrath I cannot avert, and such wrath as is forever wrath to come.

When I look to God, what can I expect? holy in his nature, and therefore infinitely removed from sin; just, and therefore bound to punish it; unchangeable, and therefore punishing eternally; omnipotent, there can be no resistance; omniscient, and therefore no escape from his notice.

Who shall deliver me? Behold me, saith the Saviour, I am he that bringeth salvation, salvation to the uttermost, mighty to save; atoning blood shall sprinkle the throne of justice, eternal wisdom shall guide thy steps, and almighty power strengthen thee. My salvation is near, I bring it to thee in my word, I seal it to thee with my blood, and will accomplish it in thee by my Spirit for ever. Do so, Lord: if thou wilt save, none can destroy.

MEDITATION XIV.

EPHESIANS ii. 5.

By Grace ye are saved.

TRUE, Lord, or such a wretch as I must despair; impotent and helpless to every thing which is good, and prone to every thing which is evil, what must become of me, if salvation was not free? it is of thy eternal purpose and grace that there is any hope for sinners; it is of thy grace, that I am called out of darkness into thy marvellous light; it is of rich grace, that when I was dead in sin, I was quickened together with Christ; it is by grace alone I stand; whatever attainments I reach unto, still it is by the grace of God I am what I am; without this grace I am nothing, have nothing, can do nothing but sin. And in eternity, as well as time, the grace of my God will alone be exalted, when the top-stone of the spiritual building is laid, it shall be with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it. When eternal life is adjudged me in the last day, it will be the gift of God in Jesus Christ; and, through eternity, this will be the theme of all the saved by grace—Thou, Lord, alone,

art worthy to receive blessing, and glory, and honor. If it be of grace then, it is no more of works; why is my foolish heart then continually going about to rob God of the glory of his grace? it is of my pride and unbelief; my unbelief that staggers at the promise, and will not suffer me to think God can be glorified more in the exercise of sovereign grace in the Redeemer, than in the execution of deserved vengeance on me, a sinner. My pride, that fain would sacrifice to its own drag, by offering something of my own to plead for my acceptance. Lord, give me clearer views of the riches of thy grace, that my unbelief may be confounded: and deeper discoveries of the utter wretchedness of all I am and do, that my pride may be abased: and thus may I thankfully embrace this free salvation, and may be content to be saved from first to last as a sinner.

MEDITATION XV.

1 PETER iii. 22.

Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.

WHAT a glorious contrast are my Saviour's sufferings and exaltation! He suffered, it became him. The cross was ignominious, but the crown he hath received exceeds in glory. He was crucified in weakness, but now all power is delivered to him in heaven and in earth. The scourges plowed up long furrows on his back; his face was disfigured with buffetings, his head pierced with thorns; but now he shineth as the sun goeth forth in his strength, glorious in holiness. The soldiers mocked, and nailed him to the tree; but angels now bow down, and hail him over all God blessed for ever. He bowed his head, and died for sin once; now death is swallowed up in victory; the mount of *Calvary* is exchanged for the mount of God; the reed for the sceptre of the universal kingdom; and the iron nails for that rod of dominion, which shall bruise his enemies to pieces, as the

vessels of a potter are broken. What cause then have I to rejoice in my King, so great and glorious in himself, and exalted on my behalf, to reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet; if he take my cause in hand, who shall be able to harm me? What are fiends of hell, or men on earth, that I should fear them? Be strong then, my soul, in the Lord, and in the power of his might; he will make thee more than conqueror on earth, till he shall take thee to reign with himself in heaven.

THE following texts, as they stand ranged under different heads, will afford abundant matter of Meditation; and as the Bible will be the best companion to the Altar, I would wish you ever to take it with you, and employ your leisure moments then, and indeed always, chiefly in considering its great and glorious truths, and meditating thereon.

HEADS OF MEDITATION.

I. *Love of God.*

Romans v. 8. John iii. 16. Eph. ii. 4. 1 John iii. 1. Rev. i. 5, 6. Titus iii. 4. 2 Cor. v. 14.

II. *Faithfulness of God.*

Heb. vi. 18. Deut. vii. 9. 1 Cor. i. 9. 1 Cor. x. 13. 1 Thess. iv. 24. 1 John i. 9. 1 Peter iv. 19. Lam. iii. 23.

III. *Pardoning Grace.*

Isaiah i. 18. Psalm ciii. 8. Neh. ix. 17. Heb. viii. 12. Isaiah xliii. 25. Isaiah xliv. 22. Micah vii. 18. Isaiah lv. 7. 1 John ii. 1. Luke vii. 47. Psalm cxxx. 4. Eph. i. 7.

IV. *Strengthening Grace.*

2 Cor. xii. 9. Isaiah xli. 10. Psalm cxix. 28. Psalm cxxxviii. 3. Phil. iv. 13. Col. i. 11.

V. *Under Temptation.*

1 Cor. x. 13. 2 Peter ii. 9. Heb. ii. 18. James i. 2. Heb. iv. 15. 2 Cor. i. 4. Ps. xlvi. 1. Psalm xci. 15. Jer. xiv. 8.

VI. *Divine Teaching.*

Isaiah liv. 13. 1 John ii. 27. Psalm xxv. 8. Jer. xxxi. 34. John xiv. 16. Psalm xxxii. 8. 1 Cor. ii. 13.

VII. *Sufficiency of Christ's Atonement and Satisfaction.*

Job. xxxiii. 24. Heb. ix. 14. 1 Peter i. 19. 1 John i. 7. Rom. viii. 1. Acts xiii. 39. 1 Tim. i. 15. Heb. vii. 25. Rom. viii. 33.

VIII. *Imputation of Righteousness.*

Rom. iv. 11. Rom. x. 4. Gal. ii. 9. Isaiah xlii. 21. Phil. iii. 9. 1 Cor. i. 30. Rom. iv. 6. Rom. v. 18. Isaiah lvi. 1.

IX. *Sanctification.*

Jer. xxxi. 33. Rom. viii. 4. Jude 1. 1 Cor. vi. 11. Rom. xv. 16. John xvii. 17. 1 Thess. v. 23. Exod. xxxi. 13. Heb. xii. 14. Luke i. 75.

X. *Person of Christ.*

Cant. v. 16. Isaiah ix. 6. Psalm xlv. 8. Isaiah lxiii. 1. Cant. i. 3. Isaiah lii. 7.

XI. *Sufferings of Christ.*

Isaiah liii. 5. Isaiah lii. 14. Col. ii. 11. Luke ii. 7. Matt. ii. 13. Luke xiii. 31. Matt. xxvi. 37. Mark xiv. 44. Matt. xxvii. 30. John xix. 23. Matt. xxvii. 29. John xix. 34. Matt. xxvii. 60.

XII. *Glory of Christ.*

Acts v. 31. Mark xvi. 19. Acts vii. 55. Phil. ii. 10. Isaiah vi. 1–5. 1 Peter iii. 22. Rev. v. 8–14.

THE

CONCLUSION.

AS the intention of the foregoing Treatise is, through the grace of God, to render Communicating a spiritual service, it will be necessary to warn those into whose hands it may fall, to be peculiarly careful not to rest upon the ordinance itself, or the exactness of their preparation according to any form which is prescribed to them, but to look chiefly to their profiting by it; to observe whether their hearts are drawn near to God in Christ, and in the memorial of his death their expectation of his coming again more enlivened. Formality is the most dangerous of all states; and outward religion, where the experimental knowledge of Christ is wanting, removes persons further from the kingdom of God, than outward vices; the one puffing up the pride of vain man, whilst the other lays him open to conviction of his danger. Let it not be imagined that this is spoken to encourage outward vices, God forbid; no, but as an awful warning to those, who, resting on the form of godliness, deny the power of it.

May you be not almost, but altogether Christians: and if the great Master of the feast bless these words to your illumination, instruction, edification, consolation, or sanctification, His be the praise; to him alone praise is due.

THE END.

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